

EVA THE FIFTH

BY

KENYON NICHOLSON

AND

JOHN GOLDEN

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EVA THE FIFTH



MAL (*poking a strawberry in her mouth*)

Well, eat 'em. You know, luxuries are really a necessity once in a while. Oh, I know there are lots of folks that think it's foolish to spend their money, but what fun do they get out of life?

"EVA THE FIFTH"—ACT I

EVA THE FIFTH

THE ODYSSEY OF A TOM SHOW
IN THREE ACTS


BY
KENYON NICHOLSON
AND
JOHN GOLDEN



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By KENYON NICHOLSON
AND JOHN GOLDEN

EVA THE FIFTH was produced by John Golden and Edgar Selwyn at the Little Theatre, New York City, August 28, 1928, with the following cast:

TRACEY BOONE	<i>Al Roberts</i>
GRACE STEEPLE	<i>Sheila Trent</i>
CONNIE BARD	<i>Nila Mack</i>
LEON MONTROSE	<i>William Wadsworth</i>
LORNA MONTROSE	<i>May Duryea</i>
DAVE AMAZON	<i>Ross Hertz</i>
ORIOLE HARTLEY	<i>Lois Shore</i>
HATTIE HARTLEY	<i>Claiborne Foster</i>
MAL THORNE	<i>Buford Armitage</i>
ED BONDELL	<i>Edward M. Favor</i>
ERNEST BEAUMONT	<i>William Sellery</i>
NEWTON WAMPLER	<i>Philip Barrison</i>
JEFF MORGAN	<i>Julian Noa</i>
JANE TRUXTON	<i>Florence Pendleton</i>
A FLAGMAN	<i>Harry Swan</i>
VIOLET	<i>Diana G.</i>

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
JOHN GOLDEN

CHARACTERS

TRACEY BOONE
GRACE STEEPLE
CONNIE BARD
LEON MONTROSE
LORNA MONTROSE
DAVE AMAZON
ORIOLE HARTLEY
HATTIE HARTLEY
MAL THORNE
ED BONDELL
ERNEST BEAUMONT
NEWTON WAMPLER
JEFF MORGAN
JANE TRUXTON
A FLAGMAN
VIOLET

ACT I. Hattie Hartley's dressing room in the Opera House, Hiawatha, Kansas.

ACT II. The Bondell Troupe car. Ten days later.

ACT III.

Scene 1: The committee room, K. of P. Hall, Centralia, Kansas. That night.

Scene 2: The stage of the K. of P. Hall. Immediately afterward.

Scene 3: Same as Scene 1.

EVA THE FIFTH

ACT ONE

Setting: Hattie Hartley's dressing-room in the Opera House, Hiawatha, Kansas. It is a small, shallow room with no windows. There is a door in the rear wall, center, which opens onto the stage. Another door, left, leads into Mal's dressing room. Along the right wall is a dressing table, with its tarnished mirror outlined in electric lights. Beneath the mirror on the table may be seen the usual theatrical paraphernalia, including a battered makeup box. To brighten up the dingy little room someone has tacked a bit of cheap cretonne around the three sides of the table. To the right of the door, center, stands Hattie's road-scarred trunk. Its lid is up, and pasted upon the lid are photographs of her friends. Above the trunk a row of hooks, upon which hang some of Hattie's clothes. To the left of the door, a property trunk. Downstage, left, a wicker theatrical hamper. On it, and the trunk, are labels reading, "Ed Bondell's U.T.C. Co." Two or three rickety kitchen chairs.

The walls are kalsomined and adorned with faded lithos of such past dramatic attractions as "Lena Rivers," "The Girl Without a Chance," "The Rosary," etc.

Time: About eleven o'clock.

At Rise: The Ed Bondell Company has just finished its evening performance of Harriet Beecher

Stowe's hardy perennial "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Off-stage the pianist can be heard "playing 'em out" with "Dixie"—double tempo. At first the stage seems to be empty but upon closer scrutiny one discovers ORIOLE, HATTIE's little sister, sound asleep on top of the hamper. She is almost completely hidden under an old coat.

After a moment MAL THORNE enters, with TRACEY BOONE at his heels, angrily talking to him. MAL wears the costume of that arch-fiend Simon Legree and carries the traditional blacksnake whip. TRACEY is in the costume of the faithful negro servitor, Uncle Tom. As they quarrel both mechanically begin to remove their costumes and makeup: Legree's ferocious moustache, Uncle Tom's blackface and wig, etc.

TRACEY

Now get me right! (*Taking MAL savagely by the lapels.*) That's the last time I'm goin' to say anything about it!

MAL (*retreating*)

Well, if that's the last time, it'll be great.

TRACEY (*following him*)

You think you're funny, don't you?

MAL (*conciliatory*)

I told you once I'm sorry. Now, lay off, Tracey, will you? (*Enters CONNIE BARD. She wears the conventional costume of Topsy. During the scene she removes her kinky wig and part of the blackface with a makeup towel.*)

TRACEY (*loudly*)

Lay off! Lay off! Every other night—!

CONNIE (*wearily*)

At it again, you two? What's the matter now?

TRACEY

He cut me across the legs again with the blacksnake, that's what he done!

MAL

Oh, I didn't hurt you—

(CONNIE goes to property trunk and deposits her wig and part of costume.)

TRACEY

I been with twenty Tom shows and I never got up against a guy that knows less about handlin' the whip. Why can't you hit me in the pad? There's certainly enough of it. . . . Always the legs . . . always the legs! God, you're a rotten actor!

CONNIE (*turning*)

Go back at him, Mal. Be more like Simon Legree offstage, you poor sap.

MAL (*lamely*)

Well, I get carried away by the part.

TRACEY

You'll get carried away on a stretcher if you do it again!

(*The "Dixie" music offstage stops.*)

MAL

Who'll put me on a stretcher?

TRACEY

I will. See!

(Enters GRACE STEEPLE, who plays Ophelia, and LORNA, who plays Eliza. They are both in costume, having just come from the final scene of the play. They go directly to the property trunk and begin to remove their wigs and costumes.)

GRACE

Say, they can hear you two out in the box-office.

LORNA

Better quit now, Tracey, or Ed'll give you your notice.

TRACEY *(sullenly)*

Well, what if he did?

CONNIE

You'd starve to death.

MAL *(laughing)*

That's right, Connie, he would!

TRACEY *(bristling)*

Who in hell are you laughing at!

(At this moment HATTIE HARTLEY enters. She is the star of the company, and plays Little Eva. She has just come from the Transformation Scene, in which she has been hoisted into the flies on a piano wire. However, the effect from the front is that of Little Eva ascending to Heaven. She is draped in a flowing robe of white cheesecloth, somewhat resembling a nightgown. To her back is fastened a

pair of soiled papier-maché angel's wings. Her face is wreathed in the traditional heavy blond curls.

HATTIE enters just in time to hear TRACEY'S remark.)

HATTIE

And, who in hell are you swearing at! Say, if you want to fight go hire a hall! (*Crossing to ORIOLE on hamper.*) How that poor kid can sleep through it all beats me!

TRACEY (*indicating MAL*)

Yes, but he—

HATTIE (*patting ORIOLE*)

Go on now, Tracey, you'll give her bum dreams.

TRACEY (*grumbling*)

Well, that guy's been a jonah to me all season.

(TRACEY exits, center.)

HATTIE (*crossing to him*)

Mal, unhook my wings, will you, honey?

MAL

Sure. (*Unfastening property angel wings.*) Gee, you were swell tonight, Hat.

HATTIE (*fondly*)

You're always saying nice things, aren't you, Mal?

MAL

How can I help it? The greatest Little Eva, the greatest little girl, the loveliest—

CONNIE (*to MAL*)

You got them lines down pat, haven't you?

MAL (*grinning*)

You bet I have! And I don't care who knows it.

HATTIE (*laughing*)

If they don't it's not because you don't broadcast it.

MAL (*kissing her*)

You don't mind, do you?

HATTIE

Mind? I like it! (*Sound of a dog barking offstage.*)

Say, that reminds me—when I was in my heaven scene that bloodhound was raising Cain!

MAL

Yeah, I tried to keep her quiet.

CONNIE

She's gettin' so touchy you can't go near her.

MAL

I guess you'd be touchy, too, if you were going to have pups.

(MAL goes into his dressing-room, removing makeup as he goes.)

CONNIE (*drily*)

Well, I guess I would at that!

HATTIE (*humorously*)

It'd be just like her to have her pups some night when she's chasing Eliza across the ice!

GRACE (*calling off to MAL*)

Where do we play tomorrow, Mal?

MAL (*offstage*)

Eagle Feather.

LORNA

Eagle Feather?

GRACE (*sighing*)

Gee, I thought we played that yesterday.

MAL (*re-entering*)

No, it's way to hell and gone the other side of Emporia.

(GRACE *goes out door, center.*)

CONNIE

Wonder why Ed books these Indian reservations. To get a laugh out of these yaps you have to lose your blanket.

(CONNIE *follows GRACE out.*)

(LEON MONTROSE *appears in doorway, rear. He is in the costume of Marks, the Lawyer.*)

LEON (*to his wife*)

You nearly ready, mother? I'd like to get us a hot dog on our way down to the car.

LORNA (*busy at property trunk*)

I'll be ready in a minute, dear.

HATTIE

Did you see Ed Bondell out there, Leon?

LEON

No, I ain't seen him.

(LORNA *joins LEON, and they exit together.*)

HATTIE (*indicating empty bottle on dressing-table*)

I got to hit him for a piece of change to get Oriole another bottle of cod liver oil. (Pause) I don't guess you got any money on you, have you, Mal?

MAL (*sheepishly feeling in his pockets*)

I don't guess I have at that. I had a dollar and a quarter but Dave borrowed it off me.

HATTIE

Well, you didn't have to give it to him.

MAL (*ingenuously*)

He said he needed it, I told him that's all I had and he said that's all he wanted.

HATTIE

Gee, not enough money in the troupe to get the kid her medicine.

MAL

Don't worry, Hat, I'll go out and put the bee on Ed.

(*Noticing ORIOLE still asleep*)

Say, you know that new geography I got for the kid? (HATTIE *nods*.) Well, while you was on stage for the plantation scene I got her so she can name the Great Lakes and bound the United States. Wanta hear her?

HATTIE

I guess you better wake her up anyway. Dave'll want to pack that hamper.

(MAL *crosses to ORIOLE and shakes her*.)

MAL

Oriole, come on, honey—get up.

(ORIOLE *moans*)

Now, quit playin' possum. You heard me. Wake up, or I'll—

(MAL *slaps her not too gently on her bottom. Instantly SHE sits up, startled. ORIOLE is a little girl about ten years old who unfortunately shows the result of her barnstorming and constant association with adults.*)

ORIOLE (*groggily*)

Who hit me?

HATTIE

Oriole, wake up; we're going down to the car pretty soon. Dave says we pull out at 12:40.

MAL

Your big sister wants to hear you bound the United State like I taught you, honey. Don't you, Hat?

HATTIE

Sure.

MAL

Come on, Honey.

ORIOLE (*rubbing the sleep out of her eyes*) Canada on the North; Atlantic on the East; Spifick Ocean on the West; and—what comes next, Mal?

MAL

Think! You know it. Don't you remember where I told you chili-con-carne comes from?

ORIOLE (*promptly*)

China.

HATTIE (*fondly*)

The poor kid's thinking of chop suey.

MAL (*to ORIOLE*)

Mum—ex—

ORIOLE

Mexico!

MAL

Good for you!

ORIOLE

Is any more candy in your room, Mal?

MAL

Yeah—on my dressing table.

ORIOLE

Can I have a piece?

MAL

I guess so.

HATTIE

Nix—not with that bum stomick of yours!

ORIOLE (*crying*)

But I want a piece!

MAL (*pleading*)

Oh, Hat—

HATTIE (*crossly*)

Every time she does a trick you gotta give her sugar. She's worse than a circus pony! (*ORIOLE sets up a howl.*) Oh, all right. Just one now.

(*ORIOLE starts for Mal's dressing-room with alacrity, sniffing as she goes.*)

MAL (*catching her by the arm*)

Whoa, Bill! Back up. Sound your A.

(*MAL applies his makeup towel to her nose. ORIOLE blows vigorously, then runs out, left.*)

HATTIE (*smiling after her*)

Mal, you're awfully good, helping me manage that young hyena.

MAL

Oh, Oriole and me are buddies.

(*Enters ED BONDELL, the owner and manager of "Ed Bondell's Uncle Tom's Cabin Company." He is a dried-up, sour little man, partly bald. He is dressed in a greasy cutaway, fancy waistcoat and in his scarf is a large diamond horseshoe.*)

ED

Where's Oriole?

MAL

In my room. Why?

ED (*evasively*)

Oh, just asking.

MAL

Oh, Ed, Oriole needs some more cod liver oil.

ED

What does she do—bathe in it!

MAL

Hat wants me to go across to the drug-store before they close. Let me have a little money, will you?

ED (*whining*)

You hams seems to think I'm a mint. I can't let you have any tonight. There was just enough in the house to get us on to the next town.

MAL

Ed, you'd do more business if you'd let us parade, like we used to.

ED

I'm running this troupe!

MAL

Well, you gotta have a parade in these small towns to sell a Tom show.

HATTIE

Ed, if you could—

MAL

Don't worry, Hat— I'll go over and I'll come back with the stuff. You wait for me, we'll go down to the car together. It'll be all right.

(MAL *goes out, left.*)

ED

Is Oriole all right?

HATTIE

Mal's taking her with him—why?

ED (*sitting*)

Oh, nothing; I just thought it'd be a good idea to have her out of the way. There's a fella comin' in to see you.

HATTIE (*interested at once*)

What about?

ED (*wheeling*)

I reckon he just thinks he'd like to get acquainted—but when you get him in here I want you to do something for me. Be extra nice to him, will you?

HATTIE

What?

ED

I want you to string him along. Tell him all about show business. Get him interested. You know.

HATTIE

No, I don't get you.

ED

Listen, you want your salaries, don't you?

HATTIE

Of course—

ED

Well, this fella is Newton A. Wampler, one of the richest men in town. (*Insinuatingly.*) Now, if he should want to go in show business and he's interested in you—why, I'd let him in—See?

HATTIE

Oh, you want me to ask him if he'll help you out.
Is that it?

ED

Yeah. I'll tell you something. If business don't pick up pretty soon I'll leave this turkey flat; but if you'll get this guy to help us over these lousy Kansas towns—I'll stick. Y'only gotta kid him along a little.

HATTIE

I don't like to do that, Ed.

ED

Why not? Say, I've been pretty nice to you. Your reputation ain't worth much in this territory.

HATTIE (*with spirit*)

I didn't ask you to come over into this territory.

ED

No—but they were gettin' kinda tired of you over in Missouri.

(*bluntly*)

You've been givin' 'em Eva a long time now.

HATTIE (*wistfully*)

Yeah, over ten years—ain't it?

ED

Yeah—you're gettin' a little passy for a kid role.

HATTIE (*indignantly*)

What do you mean *passy*?

ED

Well, you know Evas are supposed to be done by a real kid and you couldn't put out *your* birthday candles in one blow. Now, Oriole might be about the right age—if you—

HATTIE

Now I told you—I swore to Mom she'd never troupe, and that's *out*.

ED

All right—still there ain't many managers that'd let you carry a kid sister around.

HATTIE

I guess I pay her share.

ED (*taking a new tack*)

Well—come on, Hat. I don't want to argue with you. What I'm asking is as much for yourself and the troupe as for me. What do you say?

HATTIE

Well, I'll do what I can but—

ED

That's all I'm asking—do what you can. He'll be easy for you. He's just ripe for some jane to vamp.

(DAVE AMAZON, *the stage manager, enters. He is younger than the other men in the troupe, and a dynamo of energy.*)

DAVE (*going to hamper*)

Hey, Boss, Tracey's out in the box office raisin' hell—says he ain't going along with the troupe if he don't get paid.

(DAVE *folds a quilt and puts it in hamper.*)

ED

He said that, did he? I'll throw that bolshevick out of here if I have to play Tom myself! (*To HATTIE.*) Don't forget what I told you.

(ED *goes out.*)

DAVE

Well, I got him out for you, didn't I, Hat?

HATTIE (*gratefully*)

Thanks. Say, Dave, did you notice the fella that's outside waiting to see me?

DAVE (*dragging property trunk to door*)

Sure. He's a big guy in this town.

HATTIE

What does he look like?

DAVE (*jokingly*)

If he had a moustache you'd think it was Lew Cody.

HATTIE

Quit kidding. What you suppose he wants?

DAVE

He'd mashed on you—wants to meet you. (*Taking card from pocket.*) Oh, he give me one of his cards. Here.

HATTIE (*reading*)

"Newton A. Wampler."

DAVE (*nudging her*)

Kid, you've gone and snagged yourself a john.

HATTIE (*laughing*)

Oh, don't talk crazy.

DAVE

Ed said you'd see him.

HATTIE

All right—tell him to come in.

DAVE

O. K.

(DAVE starts out again, dragging trunk.)

HATTIE

And, Dave, stick around in case his blood pressure gets too high.

DAVE

If it does, I'll turn the fire-hose on him.

(DAVE goes out and shuts the door.)

(Hurriedly HATTIE puts the last minute touches to her toilet: surveys herself in the mirror, removes a grease-spot from her dress, stands on chair to see the hang of her skirt in the mirror, etc. As she is primping there is a knock at the door. HATTIE waits for a moment, in order to gain her composure. The knock is repeated. HATTIE assumes the pose of an actress about to receive an important visitor.)

HATTIE (*in a very lady-like voice*)

Come in—if you please.

(NEWTON WAMPLER *enters*. *He is about thirty-eight or forty, and from his manner and dress suggests a small-town fellow who wants to be known as a "live wire."* *He is aggressive, loud, and a little too sure of himself.*)

WAMPLER (*grinning*)

How do you do?

HATTIE

You're Mr. Wampler, aren't you?

WAMPLER (*looking around*)

Yep, that's me.

HATTIE

Don't you want to sit down?

WAMPLER

Thanks. Won't cost me any more, will it? (*They both laugh at this witticism.*) Been out in front tonight. Saw your show. S'all right.

HATTIE

I'm glad you liked it.

WAMPLER

We don't get many shows here in Hiawatha nowadays, but I manage to keep up with them. I was down to Kansas City two weeks ago; saw the Winter Garden Passing Show. *That* was something to write home about!

HATTIE (*ill at ease*)

Yes, well, if you'll excuse me I'll go right ahead with my packing. You see, my trunk has got to get down to the car.

WAMPLER

Go right ahead. (*Realizing his mistake.*) Say, I guess I'm in the right church but in the wrong pew—as the fella says. I come back here to see if I could find out about the child that's playing Eva.

HATTIE

What's that?

WAMPLER

One of your actors said she'd be in here.

HATTIE

Well, she is.

WAMPLER

Where?

HATTIE

Don't you know it was me played Little Eva?

WAMPLER (*puzzled*)

You? Aw—no—Now wait a minute. She had long gold curls.

(*HATTIE picks up her Eva wig from tray of trunk.*)

HATTIE

Well, here they are.

WAMPLER (*rising*)

Well, holy suffering cats! (*Going to her.*) So you're Hattie Hartley—(*Staring at her.*) To

think you fooled me. (*Laughs.*) Say, wait till I tell *this* one to the boys down at the club!

HATTIE

You certainly are paying me a big compliment. You really thought I was a kid. Honest?

WAMPLER

Well, maybe my eyes ain't what they used to be—

HATTIE

For Pete's sake, don't apologize! We might as well have a good laugh over it.

WAMPLER

Say, I'll let you in on a better joke than that. Even if it is on yours truly. . . You wanta know what I come back here for? Well, get this—this is *good!* (*Laughs.*) You see, we got a Child's Welfare League in town. You know what that is, don't you?

HATTIE (*anxiously*)

Why—yes—I think so. . .

WAMPLER

Well, it's to see that kids—you know, minors—get a square deal, and don't play hookey' from school and the like. I guess because I'm on the town council they elected me to the Board. . . (*Confidentially*) I don't take it very serious. . . It's run by a lot of old hens. . . Well, anyhow, tonight while I was havin' supper, Mrs. Jane Truxton called me up and said the little girl that played with the show down at the Opara House was under age and oughta be investigated. So we hot-footed it over to pinch you. (*Laughs.*)

We sent our night-police, Jeff Morgan, back here to see your manager, and he sent word to me by Jeff that I'd better see you in person. And I swear till I saw you just now with your war-paint off you wasn't a day over twelve. . . (*Laughs.*) Well, it's live and learn, as the fella says.

HATTIE

And here I been feeling lately I was getting too old to play Eva.

WAMPLER (*sitting again*)

Well, you can check that off your list of worries for some time to come. How long you been an actress?

HATTIE

I been playing this part almost ever since I can remember.

WAMPLER

All your life, eh?

HATTIE (*continuing her packing*)

Yes, my mother and her mother were Tommers—in fact, I'm the fourth Eva in the Hartley family.

WAMPLER

Where are your folks now?

HATTIE

They're dead.

WAMPLER

Orphan, eh?

HATTIE

Pop fell over a stage-brace and broke his hip—eight years ago last April in Paducah, Kentucky—and it went into pneumonia. Mom didn't live but six months after him.

WAMPLER

Show folks, too.

HATTIE (*nodding*)

We used to have an Uncle Tom's Cabin show of our own.

WAMPLER

Like this here?

HATTIE

It was *better*! Dad owned the Hartley Tommers at one time. We carried twenty-seven people, including the band; and our street parade used to reach over two city blocks.

WAMPLER

Don't you get kind of tired always travelling around?

HATTIE

You get used to it. Sometimes I think it would be nice to live in a house, but then if you've never had anything but water you don't miss champagne much—do you?

(*She smiles at him winsomely.*)

WAMPLER (*crossing to her*)

Say, you're a cute little trick. It wouldn't do for me to be around you long. You see, women are a

weakness of mine. I'm a lonely old bachelor—but I got a mighty fine business.

HATTIE

What business are you in, Mr. Wampler?

WAMPLER

Why, the furniture business, though I make most of my money on side lines. Say, I got about the best home in town. Maybe you noticed it; it's on the way up from the depot. The big white house with the cupola, set away back from the road. (*Taking snapshot from coat pocket.*) Here's a photo of it. Taken last March before the trees were out. That verandah you see goes around three sides. Pretty nice, wouldn't you say?

HATTIE (*gazing at photograph*)

Oh, gee, it's beautiful!

WAMPLER

Last Fall I had hot air put in all over.

HATTIE

You don't say! What wouldn't I give to live in a place like that!

WAMPLER (*slyly*)

Well, maybe it could be fixed.

HATTIE (*quickly handing him the snapshot*)

Oh I didn't mean——!

WAMPLER (*laughing*)

'Course you didn't. I'm not like a lot of fresh guys in this town that think because a girl's on the stage,

she's got to have loose morals. (*Patting her.*)
I guess I know a decent girl when I see one.
(*HATTIE edges away. An embarrassing situation is averted by the entrance of CONNIE BARD. SHE is now in street clothes.*)

CONNIE

Oh say, Hat—(*Seeing WAMPLER.*) Excuse me—I hate to butt in when you got company.

HATTIE

It's all right, Connie. Mr. Wampler, this is Miss Connie Bard.

CONNIE

Pleased to meet you.

WAMPLER

How's every little thing?

CONNIE (*laughing*)

You'd be surprised. (*To HATTIE.*) I just stopped in to borrow your water-wave combs. Us girls are going down to the hotel for a shampoo.

HATTIE (*going to trunk*)

They're right here.

CONNIE

Did you catch the performance tonight, Mr. Wampler?

WAMPLER

You bet I did. What part did you act?

CONNIE (*assuming Topsy pose*)

"Golly, I'se so wicked."

WAMPLER

Topsy!

CONNIE

How'd you guess it!

WAMPLER (*laughing*)

I'm just naturally bright—born that way.

CONNIE

Well—I gotta breeze along. (*She starts toward door.*) Oh, Hat, Ed says for you to attend to that little matter of business; he said you'd know what that meant.

(*CONNIE nods toward WAMPLER, who doesn't see her do it.*)

HATTIE (*hastily*)

We pull out at 12:40, remember. Don't miss the train.

CONNIE (*winking*)

How about yourself? (*WAMPLER giggles.*) Well, Mr. Wampler, I'll say so long. (*WAMPLER and CONNIE shake hands.*) Glad to have met you socially. (*CONNIE smiles at him and exits.*)

WAMPLER

She's a great little kidder; I'll bet she'd be a live one on a party.

(*HATTIE goes to her trunk, lowers the lid, trying to fasten it. But the lid sticks.*)

HATTIE

Oh, Mr. Wampler, I wonder if you'd help me with this trunk?

WAMPLER

What's the matter with it?

HATTIE

I can't seem to get it closed.

WAMPLER (*going to her aid*)

Leave it to Sandow!

HATTIE

Maybe if we sit on it. . . . (WAMPLER *and* HATTIE *sit on trunk and their weight closes the lid.*) Thanks. (HATTIE *smiles at him graciously.*)•

WAMPLER

You sure got pretty teeth when you smile.

HATTIE (*plunging in*)

Oh, Mr. Wampler, there's something I want to ask you.

WAMPLER

Ask ahead.

HATTIE

I don't suppose you'd want to go in show business, would you?

WAMPLER

How do you mean?

HATTIE

I mean, be a sort of manager.

WAMPLER (*flirting*)

I think I'd enjoy managing you, Hattie—You don't mind my calling you Hattie, do you?

HATTIE

Why, no, everybody calls me that. What I mean is—Ed Bondell, he's the boss, you know—he thought I might speak to you about it, you know, about putting up some coin and being part owner of the show.

WAMPLER

Well, I don't know; is there any money in it?

HATTIE

Well—no—that is—I never *was* in a Tom show that made money, but maybe you'd get a lot of fun out of it.

WAMPLER

I wouldn't get any fun out of losing money. From the way you talk the troupe must be in pretty bad shape?

HATTIE

Well, to tell the truth, we're up against it; haven't had salaries in over a month, and there's been some talk about attaching the car, but if a good business man like you took hold of it—

WAMPLER (*getting up from trunk*)

No, I don't think I'd care about it.

HATTIE (*following him*)

It'd be great if you would; then maybe the company could get a little of the money coming to them.

WAMPLER

No, it don't sound any good to me.

HATTIE (*resignedly*)

No, I didn't think you'd do it, but I promised Ed I'd speak to you. You see—

(ED BONDELL *enters.*)

ED (*beaming benevolently on them*)

Ah, Mr. Wampler! How are you and Miss Hartley makin' out? Didn't I tell you I had a surprise in store for you? She's not quite the babe-in-arms you expected to find, is she?

HATTIE (*laughing to cover her embarrassment*)

It certainly was a good joke.

ED

By the way, Mr. Wampler, did the little lady here speak to you about the proposition I have in mind?

WAMPLER

You mean about putting money in your show?

ED

Yes.

WAMPLER

She mentioned it, but there's nothing doing—'specially as she tells me you owe so much to the actors

and likely to have the car attached. (*Picking up his hat and coat.*) I don't believe in throwing good money after bad, if you get it. Nope. Glad to have met you—but we'll let it go at that.
(WAMPLER moves toward door.)

ED (*eagerly following him*)

You're passing up a mighty good thing.

WAMPLER

Yeah. Oh, say Hattie, what do you say we see some more of each other?

HATTIE

We're leaving town in an hour.

WAMPLER

Well, suppose I go over to the garage and get out the old bus and drive you down to the depot?

HATTIE

Well, I don't know—

WAMPLER

I'll go over and get her in a jiffy—be right here for you in no time.

HATTIE (*weakly*)

Well, if I can bring a friend along—

WAMPLER (*laughing*)

Afraid you might have to walk back, huh? Well, you needn't worry about your Uncle Dudley. He don't play that kind of marbles.

ED

Oh—er—sure you wouldn't be interested in that proposition?

WAMPLER

Not in the least.

(WAMPLER goes out. ED stares at HATTIE as if he could kill her.)

ED (*after a moment*)

Well—you fixed that fine!

HATTIE (*timidly*)

He didn't seem to care about the idea.

ED

No, 'specially, when you had to tell him everything you know. "Owe the actors—likely to have the car attached." That was a good thing to tell him!

HATTIE

I do all I can around here, but—

ED

You do a hell of a lot!

HATTIE

Yes I do! Who sewed up those snags in the olio yesterday, and who fixed it with the judge to let you off when you got drunk last week in Jack-ville, and—?

ED

Oh, what of it! That guy was a cinch if you'd just pulled him on a little. Let him think he could *make* you.

HATTIE (*bursting into tears*)

You got no right to talk to me that way!

ED (*brutally*)

Listen, sister, I'll talk to you any way I please and you'll like it!

(MAL *enters quickly from his dressing-room. He carries two packages.*)

MAL

Hey, wait a minute!

ED (*turning*)

Well, what do *you* want?

MAL

I couldn't help hearing what you were saying to Hat, and I just thought—

ED

You got no right to think, you're an actor!

MAL (*warmly*)

Well, just the same, even if you are manager, I won't let you talk that way to Hat.

ED

Oh *you* won't?.

MAL

No I won't!

HATTIE (*frightened*)

Mal, keep out of this—please!

ED (*ignoring* HATTIE)

What do you think you're going to do about it?

MAL (*clenching his fist*)

Well, if you try it again, I'll sock you in the nose, that's all.

ED

You will?

MAL

Yes, I will!

HATTIE (*frantically*)

Mal!

ED

How'd you like to know you're fired?

MAL (*taken aback*)

Yeah?

ED

Yeah.

MAL (*bravely*)

You can't fire me.

ED

Who says I can't? Your Legree ain't so good we can't get along without you.

MAL

It ain't, eh? Well, last night I took six bows while they were hissing.

ED

Just the same you're out.

MAL

I'm going to keep on working till you pay me.

ED

Oh, you are, eh?

MAL

Yes I am! You haven't paid me in over two months, except for a few dollars now and then. You owe me more than anybody else in the troupe . . . and I haven't kicked . . . but . . .

ED (*laughing scornfully*)

I know why! Because you can't keep away from this gal's skirts.

MAL (*about to strike him*)

Look out now!

HATTIE

Mal!

ED

I'm giving you your notice to quit right now.

MAL

If you want me to quit you give me what you owe me.

ED

Listen, I'm sending a wire to Kansas City for a new Legree. You take your two weeks' notice and if you ain't out of here by then I'll have you thrown out.

HATTIE (*going toward Ed*)

Ed, listen!

ED

Listen nothing! He's through.

(*ED goes out, slamming the door. HATTIE and MAL look at each other anxiously.*)

HATTIE (*sitting on trunk*)

Oh, God, Mal, now what have we done?

MAL

Well, anyhow, I told him what I thought of him.

HATTIE

You were just wonderful to stand up for me, honey, but—

MAL

The big stiff!

HATTIE

Sure. But maybe if you hadn't gone at him so hard—

MAL

You think I'd let him talk that way to you?

HATTIE

Yes, I know, dear, but you lost your job . . .

MAL (*his optimism returning*)

Oh, that's all right. This ain't the first time I've been fired.

HATTIE (*worried*)

But, Mal, don't you see what it means? It means we'll be separated. I don't know what I'd do without you?

MAL

Don't you worry, Hat. We'll fix it some way. (*Taking bottle from pocket.*) Oh, here's that cod liver oil I said I'd get for you.

HATTIE

You got it?

(*HATTIE places bottle on dressing-table.*)

MAL (*sitting on hamper*)

Sure. And here's something else. A present I got for you.

HATTIE

A present?

MAL

Yeah.

HATTIE (*going to him*)

For me?

MAL (*handing her a box of strawberries wrapped in paper.*)

Yeah, I saw 'em on a fruit stand while I was out.

HATTIE

What is it?

MAL

Oh, just a little present. Go ahead open it.

HATTIE (*she does so*)

Strawberries!—this time of year. Where'd you get the money?

MAL

I borrowed back the coin from Dave I loaned to him.

HATTIE

Mal, it was sweet of you, honey, but—

MAL

Don't you remember this morning you said you wished you had some?

HATTIE

Yes, but I didn't expect—

MAL

I thought it'd sort of cheer you up.

HATTIE

Yes—but, Mal dear, we can't afford strawberries.

MAL

Why not, didn't you say you liked 'em?

HATTIE

Of course I do. They're fine, only—

MAL (*poking a strawberry in her mouth*)

Well, eat 'em. You know, luxuries are really a necessity once in a while. Oh, I know there are lots of folks think it's foolish to spend their money, but what fun do they get out of life? Saving, saving all the time—

HATTIE

But do you realize—?

MAL (*putting another strawberry in her mouth*)

Why, I knew a fella once that put by every cent—
scrimping and saving for years till he'd got nearly
a thousand dollars and then he died. What good did
it do him?

HATTIE

But do you realize—?

MAL (*same business with strawberry*)

No sir! I believe in spending it while you got it.

HATTIE

While you got what?

MAL

While you got the price.

HATTIE

But you haven't got the price of anything—you're
broke.

MAL

All right, but you're eating strawberries, ain't you?

HATTIE (*uncertainly*)

Yes.

MAL

You stick with me and I'll see to it you get every-
thing you want. I got some ideas. It ain't going
to be long before I start a Tom show of my own,

and when I do, Hattie Hartley, the greatest Little Eva of them all'll be my star.
(*He gives her a generous hug.*)

HATTIE

It sounds fine, Mal, but you don't seem to realize—that just now—well, what are we going to do?

MAL

There's only one thing for us to do now—us two gotta get married.

HATTIE

On what?

MAL (*grinning*)

On Wednesday.

HATTIE

This is no time to joke. We can't do that right now—with you out of a job.

MAL (*confidently*)

Oh, that's all right. Lots of couples get married on nothing.

HATTIE

Yeah, but not on less than nothing—and we're minus. . . . And, then there's Oriole. She's just the age when she needs things—clothes and education.

MAL

Don't I always hear her say her lessons?

HATTIE

I know you do, Mal, but I mean real schooling. I promised Mom I'd keep her out of show business and educate her—and I simply got to do it.

MAL (*hugging her*)

All right if you want it that way, that's the way it is —

(*At this juncture WAMPLER enters—this time without knocking.*)

WAMPLER

Well, here we are, Hattie!

(*There is an embarrassing pause.*)

HATTIE

Why, Mal, this is—

(*MAL rises and confronts the intruder.*)

MAL (*coldly*)

You—you seem to be well acquainted around here.

WAMPLER

Oh, I've been here before. (*Smiling at HATTIE.*)

We're old friends.

MAL

Oh, you are?

HATTIE (*ill-at-ease*)

Oh, Mr. Wampler, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Mal Thorne who plays Legree with us.

WAMPLER (*cordially*)

How are you, Mal? You certainly were mean in your part.

MAL

I can be a lot meaner than that!

WAMPLER (*laughing*)

Did you tell Mal what a dunce I made of myself tonight thinking you were a little kid, and coming over here to arrest you? That sure was a hot one on me, Hattie.

HATTIE

Mr. Wampler is one of the head officers of the Child's Welfare Society.

MAL

Yeah?

HATTIE

Yeah.

WAMPLER (*going toward her*)

Yeah, and tonight's one time I'm glad of it. Well, the horseless carriage awaits without, Hattie. What do you say we start?

MAL

Goin' where?

WAMPLER

Why, Hattie said she'd let me drive her down to the train.

HATTIE

I said—I—I might—if, that is—with a 'friend.

WAMPLER

Oh! And this is the friend, eh? Well, if you want to bring him along, Hattie—



HATTIE (*desperately*)

Mr. Wampler, listen, you're a gentleman. If I had to leave my little sister behind, it'd just about kill me.

"EVA THE FIFTH"—ACT I

MAL

Well, she don't—and she's not going along!

HATTIE

Mal—! I don't think I'd better, Mr. Wampler.
Thank you just the same.

WAMPLER

What! After you promised, and me going over
and getting out the auto?

MAL

Can't she change her mind?
(ORIOLE *enters from MAL's dressing-room.*)

ORIOLE

Say, Hat, there's an old guy out there been asking
me questions.

WAMPLER (*grinning at ORIOLE*)

Well, whom have we here?

ORIOLE (*suspiciously eyeing WAMPLER*)

I wish these hicks would leave me be.

HATTIE

Now! (*To WAMPLER.*) This is my kid sister.
Honey, shake hands with Mr. Wampler.
(ORIOLE *does so reluctantly.*)

WAMPLER

What's your name, little girl?

ORIOLE (*meekly*)

Oriole.

WAMPLER

Oriole, eh?

ORIOLE

That's what I said.

WAMPLER (*to HATTIE*)

It's a kind of odd name— isn't it?

HATTIE (*proudly*)

It's different. Mom called her that because when she was born and Mom was coming out of the ether, there was a bird outside her window singing, and the doc told her it was an Oriole. See?

ORIOLE (*to WAMPLER*)

I can say all Hat's part in the show.

WAMPLER (*amused*)

You can, can you?

ORIOLE

Want to hear it?

MAL

Nix.

HATTIE (*apologetically to ORIOLE*)

Not now, dear.

ORIOLE (*perversely*)

I can say "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight."

MAL

Cut it out!

ORIOLE

Well I can.

WAMPLER (*laughing*)

She's certainly got a mind of her own.

(*Enters JEFF MORGAN, a big rawboned Westerner. He is Hiawatha's sole police protection during the night. He is in plain clothes.*)

JEFF

Hullo, Newt.

WAMPLER

Hello, Jeff.

JEFF (*significantly*)

Well, what do you say?

ORIOLE (*under her breath*)

That's the guy, Mal!

JEFF

Well, ain't this here the youngun we're looking for?

HATTIE (*alarmed*)

Looking for?

MAL (*putting his arms about ORIOLE*)

What you looking for her for?

JEFF

Orders of the Child's Welfare Society. Ain't you told 'em about it, Newt?

WAMPLER (*a great light coming*)

I get it now! *This* is the kid Mrs. Truxton saw down at the railroad station.

MAL

Well, what of it?

JEFF

Don't you know all kids under sixteen have to go to school?

ORIOLE (*piping up*)

Here's one that don't!

MAL (*to JEFF*)

Who says so?

WAMPLER

Well, there's a law here in Kansas to that effect.

JEFF (*showing badge*)

There sure is, and you show-folks got no business side-stepping it.

MAL

We been out all season and no one's said anything about her before.

JEFF

Then all I can say is, our League's more active than the rest.

HATTIE

How *can* I send her to school, mister, when we're travelling all the time?

JEFF

Well, we got a special institution out to the edge of town for just such cases.

HATTIE (*appealing to WAMPLER*)

You won't let 'em do that—will you, Mr. Wampler?

WAMPLER (*enjoying his power*)

Well you see, Hattie, it's not entirely in my hands.

HATTIE

But you're one of the officers. They'd do what you said.

ORIOLE (*starting to cry*)

Don't let 'em take me, will you, Mal?

MAL (*comforting her*)

You bet I won't! (*Angrily to JEFF and WAMPLER.*)
I hope you're satisfied!

JEFF

I'm only following out orders.

HATTIE (*desperately*)

Mr. Wampler, listen, you're a gentleman. If I had to leave my little sister behind, it'd just about kill me. She's always been with me—and she needs me worse than you know. Since Mom died, I'm the only mother she's got!

WAMPLER (*grandly*)

Well, we'll see what can be done, Hattie.

HATTIE (*pleading*)

Will you, please? I'd never get through thanking you—

WAMPLER

Jeff, what do you say we let the kid go?

JEFF

Well, what you goin' to tell Mrs. Truxton? She's waiting out in front of the Opera House now.

WAMPLER

We can tell her she skipped town.

JEFF

I can't do that, Newt——

WAMPLER

Why not?

JEFF

Mrs. Truxton is president. She got me my job. I'm responsible to her.

MAL

Listen, mister—our train leaves at twelve-forty and I'm telling you the kid's goin' along with us!

JEFF

That kind of talk won't get you nowhere.

WAMPLER

Jeff, step out front and tell Mrs. Truxton I'd like to see her a minute.

JEFF

She didn't wanta come on to the stage of no the-ay-ter.

WAMPLER

Well, she'll come for me. Maybe when she sees these folks she'll change her mind.

JEFF (*reluctantly*)

Well, you're the doctor.

(JEFF goes out.)

HATTIE (*gratefully*)

Thanks, Mr. Wampler. And oh, listen—you can tell the lady that's making the complaint—that Oriole *does* get some schoolin'—Mal's got her some books and he makes her study.

MAL

Right now she knows more than most of the company about bounding states, and geography and figgering.

ORIOLE

Ask me the capital of something.

MAL

Italy.

ORIOLE (*promptly*)

Rome!

MAL

France.

ORIOLE

Paris!

MAL

Turkey. (ORIOLE *hesitates.*) Turkey! (*Impatiently.*) Come on—you know the capital of

Turkey! (*ORIOLE shakes her head.*) Well, never mind—name the Great Lakes.

ORIOLE

Michigan, Superior, Erie, Ontario and Niagara Falls—Niagara Falls—

MAL (*proudly to WAMPLER*)

How's that?

WAMPLER (*impressed*)

That's more'n I could do myself.

ORIOLE (*as if wound up*)

And six times six is thirty-six; six times seven is forty-two; six—

MAL (*putting his hand over her mouth*)

That's enough.

HATTIE

Don't you think now, Mr. Wampler, if the lady hears that she'll let her go?

WAMPLER

I certainly do.

(*DAVE enters, rear.*)

DAVE (*going to hamper*)

Oh, excuse me—I gotta get this hamper outa here.
(*MAL watches him; then suddenly an idea comes to him.*)

MAL (*excitedly*)

Oh, Dave, you're just in time! Leave it alone. Open that hamper—quick!

DAVE

What's the idea?

MAL

Do what I tell you! Come here, Oriole. (*He picks her up bodily and deposits her in the hamper.*) You're going to take a ride. (*ORIOLE cries and struggles.*) But not to no institution; get in here, quick—and we'll shut the lid!

ORIOLE (*wailing*)

I'll strangle!

MAL

There's plenty of air and I'll open it when we get on the truck.

HATTIE (*breathlessly*)

Oh, Mal, that's wonderful! (*Turning to WAMPLER.*) Mr. Wampler—you going to let us do it?

WAMPLER

We'll try it, Hattie.

MAL (*to ORIOLE*)

Now don't make a sound.

ORIOLE

I'm scared!

MAL

It's only for a minute, honey. I and Hat will go with you on the truck.

WAMPLER (*who has been watching at door*)

Hurry up; here they come!

(MAL and DAVE slam down the lid of the hamper, and all try to look very unconcerned as JEFF enters, followed by JANE TRUXTON.)

WAMPLER (*to throw them off the scent*)

Well, now folks, you better bring that little girl back here, or there'll be trouble—

JEFF

Here's Mrs. Truxton.

(MRS. TRUXTON is a middle-aged woman, who, since the death of her husband, has devoted most of her time to civic welfare work. She is not particularly disagreeable, but she knows her duty and allows nothing to swerve her from it.)

WAMPLER

Hello, Jane. This is Mrs. Truxton, Miss Hartley. Mrs. Truxton is president of our Child's Welfare League.

MRS. TRUXTON (*nodding to HATTIE*)

Where's the child, Newton?

WAMPLER

I think—she's in the other room.

MRS. TRUXTON (*to HATTIE*)

Are you the child's sister?

HATTIE

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. TRUXTON (*not unkindly*)

I dislike doing this thing more than I can tell you, but it's the duty of our Society to investigate—Oh, you needn't be afraid though; she'll get the best of care at the institution.

WAMPLER

Listen, Jane, I don't see any necessity for drastic action. I'll be personally responsible——

HATTIE

Oh, thank you, Mr. Wampler.

WAMPLER (*continuing to Mrs. Truxton*)

And, if she proves her case you'd only have to let her go tomorrow.

HATTIE

But we're leaving tonight, and I don't want to go without her.

WAMPLER

Now don't worry, Hattie. (*Turning to Mrs. Truxton.*) I don't see why we have to interfere in this particular case, Jane.

(*MRS. TRUXTON realizes that she can look for but little support from her fellow-townsmen.*)

MRS. TRUXTON (*coldly*)

I don't believe our committee needs your report this time, Newton. . . You say the child's in that room?

WAMPLER

She was,

MRS. TRUXTON

Come along, Mr. Morgan. We must get her.

(MRS. TRUXTON *without further ado goes into MAL's dressing-room, followed by JEFF.*)

HATTIE (*taking WAMPLER's hand*)

You're a real friend, Mr. Wampler. I'll never forget what you did——

(*As JEFF appears again in the door, left, MAL hastily coughs a warning to HATTIE.*)

I'll never forget that you *tried* to help me.

WAMPLER

Oh, that's all right. I want to be a better friend of yours, Hattie. I like you. Say, what's the name of your next town?

MAL (*glaring at WAMPLER*)

Give me a hand with this hamper, will you, Dave. It's full of props. We got to finish loading that truck.

DAVE (*taking one end of hamper*)

O. K.

MAL (*as they start out*)

Come along with me, Hat.

WAMPLER

I think Hattie's going to let me drive her down to the car. Ain't you, Hattie?

HATTIE (*confused*)

Why—yes, Mal, if Mr. Wampler wants me to, I think I'd ought to go with him.

(MAL drops his end of the hamper, and is about to remonstrate when MRS. TRUXTON'S voice is heard.)

MRS. TRUXTON (offstage)

Oh, Mr. Morgan, I can't find her. Do come and help me.

JEFF

Right with you, Mrs. Truxton.

(JEFF goes out, left.)

ORIOLE (pushing up lid of hamper like a jack-in-the-box)

I know that capital now, Mal. Constantinople!

(In a panic, MAL slams down the lid of the hamper, and he and DAVE start out with it, as JEFF and MRS. TRUXTON enter once more, left. As the hamper disappears HATTIE gives WAMPLER a look of great relief. JEFF and MRS. TRUXTON ad lib.)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Setting: Inside of the Bondell troupe car. It is a transection of an old-fashioned sleeping-coach, showing the berths, three high. In spite of its dinginess the car has a rather comfortable, home-like appearance. The members of the company have pasted pictures and photographs in their berths, and have made other pathetic attempts to beautify the place. Every square inch of space is utilized: suitcases, bundles, lithographs, etc. In the center of the car is an open space, with a table and two chairs. Behind the table are two large windows. Near the windows a cupboard and a water-cooler and a sink. All of the berths are occupied. On the left side of the car the sleeping quarters of the men: EARNEST, DAVE, ED BONDELL, TRACEY and MAL. On the other side CONNIE, HATTIE, ORIOLE, GRACE, LEON and LORNA.

Time: Early morning. Ten days later.

At Rise: The curtains are drawn and the company is asleep. Several of the MEN are snoring loudly. VIOLET, the bloodhound, is tied to a leg of the table. A FLAGMAN enters, left, and passes through the car, with his flag and lantern. After a moment ED BONDELL is seen about to emerge from his berth. DAVE, who sleeps above him, climbs out of his berth and ED hastily draws back and closes his curtains. DAVE exits into washroom, right. ED peers out once more, and sees that the coast is clear, emerges fully dressed. Stealthily he collects his belongings, tiptoes across to VIOLET,

unties her, and with a backward glance at the car, steals out, left, loaded down with bundles and dog. There is another pause.

ORIOLE (*behind curtains*)

Hattie. . . . Hattie—I wanta drinka water!

HATTIE (*sleepily*)

Now, listen, Oriole, that's the fourth time tonight.

MAL

Don't bother, Hat, I'll get it for her.

(MAL *gets out of his bunk, throws an overcoat over his underwear and crosses, left.*)

HATTIE (*as he passes bunk*)

Thanks, Mal. She's had a feverish stomick all night, and I'm dead for sleep.

MAL

It's that chop suey she ate last night.

(MAL *goes into washroom, left.*)

ORIOLE

Hattie, the car's stopped. We're in!

TRACEY (*unseen*)

Will somebody choke that brat!

HATTIE (*unseen*)

Ssh, Oriole!

(MAL *returns left, with cup of water.*)

MAL

Here you are, kid.

ORIOLE

Thanks, Mal.

MAL (*pushing back curtains*)

Why, you're all dressed.

ORIOLE

Well, it's so cold.

MAL

That's 'cause we're leavin' the plains and gettin' up in the mountain country—.

ORIOLE

What mountains?

MAL (*pointing to hills in the distance*)

I *think* these are the Ozarks, and that range you see there is the—

TRACEY (*sticking out his head*)

For God's sake, is this any time for a geography lesson!

(MAL *returns to his berth.*)

ORIOLE (*prattling on*)

I dreamt last night I fell out of an airplane and didn't get killed.

CONNIE (*unseen*)

Well, now that's too damn bad!

HATTIE (*unseen*)

Be quiet, Oriole—you're disturbing everybody.



MAL

I'm in front, setting in the auto with Oriole!

"EVA THE FIFTH"—ACT II—SCENE II

ORIOLE (*climbing out of her berth*)

Hattie, can I go out and get some air?

TRACEY AND CONNIE (*unseen*)

Yeah, give her the air!

HATTIE (*unseen*)

Is it all safe out there, Mal?

MAL

Sure—they've got us on the siding. (*Looking out of car window.*) And the rain's stopped.

HATTIE (*unseen*)

All right. You can go, but be careful on the tracks.

ORIOLE (*going to MAL*)

Fasten my shoes—will you, Mal?
(*She is carrying her ukelele.*)

MAL (*sitting on berth and indicating his knee*)

Put your foot up here. (ORIOLE *plays a chord or two of "It Ain'ta Goin' To Rain No More."*)
Not too loud, kid.

CONNIE (*sticking out her head*)

Ain't it swell to be woke up by a weather report!
Hey, listen, squirt—will you pipe down?

LORNA (*showing herself sitting in berth and partially dressed*)

Oriole, if I give you some gum drops, will you go out and play?

ORIOLE

You bet. (*Skiping over to LORNA.*) Watch my eucalyptus, will you, Mal?

(ORIOLE *puts her ukelele on table.*)

MAL (*who is making up his bunk*)

Better not let Hat see you feeding her candy.

ORIOLE

Oh, Hat—she's dead to the world!

(ORIOLE, *with bag of candy, goes out, left*)

LEON (*looking down into his wife's berth*)

You awake down there, mother?

LORNA

Yes, Leon, how'd you sleep?

LEON (*yawning*)

Not so worse. What time is it?

LORNA

Little after nine.

TRACEY (*sticking out his head*)

Are we in?

CONNIE

Yeah—all in!

MAL (*looking out*)

Yeah—looks like Clay Center.

LEON

Mother, where the hell's my pants?

ERNEST (*peering out of berth*)

How do you expect a body to sleep with you yellin' for your pants in the middle of the night?

LORNA (*taking them from under him*)

You put 'em there to press 'em.

(DAVE *enters from right with towel and soap.*)

DAVE

Well, hams, we're in. Another day another dollar—
(DAVE *goes to table, takes out pocket mirror and comb and completes his toilet. He puts on his necktie. MAL by this time is doing the same. MAL a moment later exits, right.*)

LORNA (*to LEON*)

Hand me down our tooth paste, dear.

CONNIE (*opening curtains, with a yawn*)

You might as well try to sleep in a shootin' gallery—
(*Climbing down.*) Well, I would be an actress!

DAVE

You flatter yourself!

(CONNIE *gives DAVE a black look. LORNA starts out, left, with toilet kit.*)

CONNIE (*starting to dress*)

Hey, Lorna—don't stay in there too long.

TRACEY (*tying his shoes*)

Well, I'll hand you all a piece of news. I'm quittin' this turkey to-day.

CONNIE

Quit your kiddin'.

DAVE

Oh, shut up!

TRACEY

If you don't believe it, ask Ed Bondell.

DAVE

Shut up, or he'll hear you and think you mean it.

TRACEY

He knows it.

DAVE

Yeah, I heard you bolshevicks pull that before.

TRACEY

Well, here's one bolshevick that's goin' through.

LEON

Aw, dry up! You wouldn't dare tell that to Ed.
(*Exit LEON, into washroom, right. MAL enters, right, and goes to his berth.*)

TRACEY

I *did* tell it to Ed. I told him last night he'd stalled me for the last time. I gave him a chance to pay me what I got comin' and he wouldn't let loose of a nickel. So you're givin' the opera to-night without Uncle Tom.

DAVE

That's two of you quittin' the troupe. When do *you* leave, Mal?

MAL (*combing his hair at table*)

Ed says Thursday, but plenty can happen before then.

TRACEY (*laughing, to DAVE*)

The poor sap's waitin' for Ed to pay him.

MAL

Oh, I'm not worrying about the money.

HATTIE (*who has risen, and slipped into her kimono, crosses left to exit, as LORNA comes out*)

No, that's the least of Mal's worries!

(HATTIE *goes out, right.*)

TRACEY

Well, if you hams wanta keep on working for nothing, that's your look-out.

TRACEY (*taking MAL'S shaving brush from his berth*)

Can I use your shavin' brush?

MAL

You got it, ain't you?

(TRACEY *exits, right, with his toilet kit.*)

DAVE

It's a lucky thing for him Ed's a heavy sleeper. He'd tame him down.

HATTIE (*entering left, and goes to her berth*)

The wash-room tank's gone dry again.

CONNIE

Why not, we're in Kansas!

(CONNIE *goes into washroom, left. LEON enters, right.*)

MAL (*gazing out one of the center windows*)

A grain elevator, a depot and a filling station.

DAVE (*taking his stand beside him*)

Ain't it true, they're all alike? (*Then suddenly.*)

Well, what the hell! This ain't Clay Center; the sign on the depot says Centralia. What's the big idea!

LEON (*hurrying to window and looking out*)

Yeah—what do you suppose it means?

DAVE (*grabbing his cap from his berth*)

Damned if it don't look like they unhooked us at the wrong burg!

(*DAVE goes out, right, to investigate.*)

LEON (*worried*)

Think we ought to wake Ed and tell him?

MAL

It'll be all right. No, wait till Dave gets back. We're likely just laying over between trains.

LORNA

Just so they don't forget us altogether——

GRACE (*pushing aside the curtains of her berth*)

Good morning. (*Yawning.*) Are we in?

LEON

We're in Centralia, if that means anything to you.

(*LEON goes out, right.*)

GRACE (*climbing out of her berth*)

Centralia? I thought we were due in Clay Center?

MAL

It'll be all right, Dave's gone to see about it.

(GRACE goes into washroom, left.)

LORNA

Expect Mr. Wampler around again today, Hattie?

HATTIE (*glancing at MAL to see if he has heard*)

Why, I don't know——

MAL (*jealously*)

Oh you don't, eh? Well if he don't show up, it's because that trick auto of his is busted.

(*It is plain that WAMPLER has become a sore point between them.*)

HATTIE

Oh, just because *you* don't like him.

MAL

You're damned right I don't!

HATTIE

Well, he did me a big favor back there in Hiawatha when he let us get Oriole away from the Children's Society.

MAL

Favor! Yeah, and he's been following you around like Mary's lamb for over a week.

HATTIE

I don't *ask* him to follow me. How can I keep him away?

MAL

I don't notice you trying very hard. Where did you go riding with him last Sunday?

HATTIE (*trying to keep her temper*)

I told you—we only took a little drive out to a place he wanted to show me called Bear Cave.

MAL

Oh, he's a cave man!

HATTIE

We weren't gone more than an hour. We never even got out of the machine.

MAL

Then how did you get them daisies you brought back?

HATTIE

Why, he—

MAL

I suppose you'll tell me he's got long arms and picked 'em on the fly.

HATTIE

Oh, Mal, don't talk foolish!

CONNIE (*entering*)

What they call that a washroom for, I wish somebody would tell me!

(DAVE hurries on, right, to ED's berth.)

DAVE

Ed! Ed! (*Pulls back the curtain of ED's berth and discovers that he is not there.*)

Now where the hell has *he* went to?

MAL

Why? What's happened?

DAVE

Plenty! Has anybody seen Ed?

MAL

Ain't he in there?

DAVE

No.

LEON (*crossing to DAVE, followed by LORNA*)

Tell *us* what's the matter?

DAVE (*breathlessly*)

I just seen the yardmaster, and he says there's been a big washout down the line at Foley's Bridge—

HATTIE

Good heavens!

(*All gather around DAVE at this startling disclosure.*)

CONNIE

Where's that?

(*TRACEY enters, right, his face covered with shaving lather. LEON goes to tell him the news, followed by LORNA.*)

DAVE

Ten miles west of here—Snake River's on the rampage—worst flood in years—!

MAL

I been worried about these hard rains lately.

TRACEY

What's it got to do with us?

DAVE

It means we're stuck here, you simp! There ain't no track for more'n a mile—
We're *stuck* here——!

DAVE

Yes. The bridge is gone! Water's raisin' hell —
Whole farms under water—they don't know how many people drowned and killed.

MAL

Good God!

HATTIE (*to CONNIE*)

Oh, those poor people!

ERNEST (*sticking his head anxiously out of his berth*)

I didn't hear all you said.

DAVE

Well, all you need to hear is that there ain't a chance in the world of us gettin' to Clay Center. It's twenty miles from here, with a roarin' ocean between us. There ain't a Chinaman's chance of our giving a show tonight.

HATTIE (*suddenly*)

Where's Oriole?

MAL (*peering out of window*)

It's all right; I see her. She's coming over from that garage across the way.

(HATTIE goes to window to reassure herself that ORIOLE is safe.)

DAVE

What I wanta know is, where's Ed?

TRACEY

You know what I think?

DAVE

No—what?

TRACEY (*always the pessimist*)

I think he's skipped and left us to hold the bag.

LORNA

Oh, Ed Bondell wouldn't do a thing like that.

MAL

Oh, wouldn't he!

TRACEY

Owing us all that money and any day the outfit liable to be attached—

LEON

Where's the dog gone? My God, the hound's gone, too!

(*This discovery throws them into a panic.*)

GRACE (*entering, left*)

What's the matter?

DAVE (*at ED's berth*)

Hey—he's cleaned his bunk! All of Ed's things are gone!

(*The company look in ED's berth, as ORIOLE enters, left.*)

ORIOLE (*cockily*)

Hey, you know what? The man over to the garage says the town of Centralia's got a bum lot of troupers on their hands.

ERNEST (*climbing down from his berth*)

Who said that?

HATTIE (*going to her*)

What are you saying, Oriole?

ORIOLE

Well, that's what the man over to the garage said. He's got Violet, too.

MAL

He's got Violet!

ORIOLE

Yeah, I wanted to take her but the man said she was *his* dog now.

MAL AND CONNIE

What do you mean—his?

ORIOLE

He said the boss of the show came in this morning and traded him Violet for an auto ride over to Center Junction.

(There is a silence of dismay for a moment. They realize that the worst has happened.)

TRACEY *(triumphantly)*

Now will you believe Ed's blown?

GRACE *(with a glimmer of hope)*

Maybe he's just gone to Center Junction to get some money for us.

MAL

Yeah! That's just like him.

DAVE

Well, I'll find out for myself!

(DAVE hurries out, right.)

HATTIE *(sitting dejectedly)*

Well, that's just about all we needed!

(The following speeches are spoken almost at the same time.)

LEON

The dirty, two-timing skunk!

CONNIE

I been expecting this right along.

GRACE

So have I.

ERNEST

The next time I sign up with a cheap fly-by-night, it'll be because I lost my mind.

(ERNEST goes out, right.)

TRACEY

I told you that yellow rat'd skip.

CONNIE

Can you imagine—stranded, and in my first show!

GRACE

And I'd hate to tell you what he owes me.

LORNA (*on the verge of tears*)

Oh, Leon, what will we do?

LEON (*putting a comforting arm about her*)

Now, that's all right, mother——

CONNIE (*disgustedly*)

I've heard about this walkin' home, but never from
a railroad ride!

ORIOLE

Ain't there goin' to be any more show, Hat?

HATTIE

I don't know. . . .

ORIOLE (*ready with the solution*)

Well, *we* won't have to walk; Mr. Wampler'll give
us a ride in his auto.

HATTIE

Yes, yes! Hush!

MAL

You wanta know what put us on the rocks?

TRACEY (*sarcastically*)

No, what, Mr. Bones?

MAL

Because Ed wouldn't do what I told him many a time. If we'd only had a street parade—

(This causes the troupe to groan in unison.)

TRACEY

Well, you're goin' to get all the parade you want right now!

(DAVE enters, right, dejectedly.)

DAVE

Well, the kid had the right dope.

TRACEY

You mean about Ed's skippin'?

DAVE

Yeah—we'll never see that skunk again. The garage fella told me he's driving over to Center Junction to catch the through Limited. That crook's on his way to Kansas City by now. And we're stranded—flat on our fannies——

LORNA

What're we going to do?

LEON

Don't worry, mother.

ORIOLE *(looking out of her berth window)*

Hattie! Hattie, there's Mr. Wampler over in the garage in his auto!

CONNIE

He's a little early today.

LEON

I expect he's heard about the wash-out.

DAVE

Why, there's your answer. (*To HATTIE.*) Maybe your friend Wampler'll stake us, if you ask him to. (*All are struck by this idea.*)

CONNIE

Why, Hat, sure! That bird was sent to us straight from heaven.

TRACEY

Sure, Hat, you can save the crowd—get us all out of this if you want to.

DAVE

All you got to do is to kid him along a little—

MAL (*angrily*)

Hey, wait a minute! Hat won't do any such thing. She can't—!

HATTIE

Why can't I?

TRACEY (*to MAL*)

No, she can't do anything to help her friends. She's gotta do what *you* say—

MAL

Who's talking to you!

HATTIE

But, Mal, do you realize—we're up against it hard?

MAL (*stubbornly*)

Well, what of it—we'll find a way out, and I won't have you asking any favors of that big blowhard!

HATTIE

Maybe, I wouldn't *have* to ask him—maybe when he hears how bad things are—

CONNIE

Sure, maybe he'll come across himself.

MAL

Now look here, Hat—I don't want you talkin' to that fella any more.

HATTIE

But, Mal, don't be silly—I ought to do what I can to help the troupe—

TRACEY

Atta girl!

CONNIE

Good for you, Hat!

DAVE

You can fix it—

CONNIE

Want me to go out and get him for you?

HATTIE

No, I'll go myself. I'll bring him in here. Tracey, all of you get out before I come back—so I can talk to him alone.

TRACEY

Sure. (*To others.*) Come on, hams—Clear the stage—

CONNIE (*going*)

Let's give the kid a chance to put on her vampin' shoes—

(*HATTIE goes out, left. GRACE and TRACEY exit, right, talking excitedly as they go.*)

LEON (*as he exits, with LORNA*)

He surely won't turn her down, do you think, mother?

(*LORNA shakes her head ominously. MAL stands looking after them sadly.*)

DAVE

Better get out, too, Mal. If you're here when she comes back, you'll only be in the way.

(*DAVE goes out, right. ORIOLE, oblivious to the catastrophe, has been sitting in her berth studying her geography.*)

ORIOLE

Say, Mal, what's the rise and source of the Amazon River?

MAL (*in a brown study*)

I don't know.

ORIOLE (*coming to him*)

Why—worried about something?

MAL (*half to himself*)

She changed lately—

ORIOLE (*after a moment*)

Mal, why don't you marry Hattie?

MAL

What's that?

ORIOLE

I said—why don't you marry Hat and keep her away from that fella Wampler.

MAL (*in the depths*)

Because she wouldn't have me—because she'd be a sucker if she did—because *I'm no good!* Is that reasons enough for you?

ORIOLE (*taking his hand*)

You *are* good, Mal, and Hat loves you, and if you just amounted to something—

MAL

Yeah, that's just it—if I amounted to something—

ORIOLE

Well, you could. If you could just be a business man and get up and do things, you could make more money than even that old Mr. Wampler.

MAL

No. There's nothing I can do but act.

ORIOLE

Well, you ain't so hot as an actor.

MAL (*startled out of his reverie*)

Who told you that?

ORIOLE

Oh, Tracey—

MAL (*indignantly*)

Oh, he did, eh? By God—I'll amount to something!

ORIOLE

What you goin' to do?

MAL (*in a frenzy of determination*)

I don't know but I'm going to do it, and I'm going to do it right now—right here in Centralia, or whatever the damn place is called. I'll amount to something!

(*He stalks out, right.*)

ORIOLE (*running after him*)

Lemme go with you—I want to see you when you amount to something!

(*HATTIE and WAMPLER enter, left.*)

HATTIE (*embarrassed*)

Come right in, Mr. Wampler. You've never been in the car before, have you?

WAMPLER (*looking around, amused*)

Well, this certainly is living in cramped quarters. I got closets in my house almost bigger'n this. (*Laughing.*) I'll bet you got no more privacy than a goldfish, if you get it.

HATTIE

I'll have to apologize for the way things look. We hadn't any more than got up when we heard about Ed's skipping.

WAMPLER

First time I saw that fella I knew he was as crooked as a dog's hind leg!

HATTIE (*trying to come to the point*)

It's a terrible thing for these people to be stuck here.

WAMPLER (*sitting*)

Yeah, and that wash-out down the line—

HATTIE

You see, the worst of it is that Ed's not paid anybody's salary for over two months and some of the troupe are up against it hard.

WAMPLER

What'll they do now—go to their homes?

HATTIE

Why, they haven't got the price of a railroad ticket or even food. Don't you see—they're all stranded.

WAMPLER

Well, what about yourself?

HATTIE

Oh, I'm not thinking about myself *so much*. I kind of feel like *they're* so helpless.

WAMPLER

Oh, don't worry about other people; you got to think about yourself. And I'll tell you something, Hattie, I got a way out for you. You don't have to stay in this rotten business—travellin' with a lot of

low-down actors, sleepin' on shelves; you're made for finer things, good clothes and a refined life'd make another person out of you.

HATTIE

Yes, I know, Mr. Wampler, but—

WAMPLER

Now, I'm a business man. I got plenty of cash; supposing you and me get down to cases. (*Coming nearer.*) I'll make you a little proposition.

HATTIE (*on guard*)

A proposition?

WAMPLER

Certainly, I guess you know what I mean, don't you?

HATTIE (*backing away*)

Why, no, Mr. Wampler—

WAMPLER

What do you suppose I've been following you around the country all this time for?

HATTIE

Why, I don't know —

WAMPLER

You don't think it's because I'm stuck on seeing "Uncle Tom's Cabin," do you?

HATTIE

Why—no—

WAMPLER (*following her*)

I've been studying about you ever since I first saw you. You appeal to me. (*Taking her hands in his.*) Come on now—what'd you say if I asked you to marry me?

HATTIE (*astonished*)

Marry you? Why, Mr. Wampler!

WAMPLER (*grinning complacently*)

Surprise you?

HATTIE (*greatly relieved*)

Yes, kind of.

WAMPLER

Well, I figure I got to settle down some time. You know—eventually, why not now? (*He laughs loudly.*) You wouldn't mind givin' up the stage and livin' in a decent home, would you?

HATTIE

I wouldn't mind if—

WAMPLER

'Course you wouldn't. And it would mean keeping your young sister away from this here life and givin' her a decent schooling. You could live like a little queen.

HATTIE

Well, I can't—

WAMPLER

Huh?

HATTIE

I can't make up my mind all of a sudden; but couldn't you help the troupe out?

WAMPLER

Well now, considering these show-folks are nothin' in my young life, do you think it's fair to ask me?

HATTIE (*slowly*)

No, I guess it isn't.

WAMPLER (*going to her*)

Of course not, but if you'll say yes to me—

HATTIE

Why I can't do that just now.

WAMPLER

I know it's a little sudden but take your time to think it over. I'm in no hurry.

HATTIE

I certainly appreciate your asking me—any girl would feel honored; but it wouldn't seem right—going off and leaving a troupe stranded you been playing with.

WAMPLER

Well, now wait a minute—supposin' I *did* say I'd take care of 'em—the whole shebang, and sent 'em back to where they want to go. How would you like that?

HATTIE

Mr. Wampler, if you did that you'd make me the happiest girl in the world. (*Impulsively.*) It would be wonderful! I could just about kiss you.

WAMPLER

You could? Well, maybe I'll take you up on that. I'll take that kiss right now.

HATTIE

No, no wait—!

WAMPLER

Why wait? I ain't poison ivy. You made the proposition yourself. Come on. (*He takes her in his arms and kisses her; MAL enters, left, and stands watching them transfixed.*) You're just lovely! (*Pursuing her.*) One more.

HATTIE (*pushing him away and laughing uneasily.*)

Now—now—be satisfied.

WAMPLER

Listen, I'll be liberal with you, too. We could live together like—

MAL (*advancing on WAMPLER as if to annihilate him*)

Oh, you could—could you?

HATTIE

Mal!

WAMPLER (*calmly*)

You back again?

MAL (*white with rage*)

Yeah, and I'll give you just ten seconds to get out of here!

(MAL *hands* WAMPLER *his hat*.)

WAMPLER

What if I don't?

MAL

Then I'll *throw* you out!

HATTIE (*frightened*)

Mal!

WAMPLER (*backing away*)

Oh, no, you won't.

MAL

Won't I?

HATTIE (*putting herself between them*)

Mr. Wampler, I apologize for his actions, and if you'll just wait for me outside—I want a few words with Mr. Thorne.

WAMPLER (*smirking*)

Certainly, Hattie, anything you say.

(WAMPLER *goes out, left*.)

HATTIE

Well, you made a nice spectacle out of yourself, I must say!

MAL (*endeavoring to restrain himself*)

You looked fine, too, in that guy's arms, *kissing* him!
How long has that been going on?

HATTIE

Why, it was the first time—

MAL

Yes, it was!

HATTIE

I told him he could—

MAL

You told him?

HATTIE

Sure, he offered to help out the troupe.

MAL

Oh, buying you, with his coin! Now what does that make you?

HATTIE

I won't have you talk like that!

MAL

No, but you'll let this small-town masher insult you!

HATTIE

He didn't insult me!

MAL (*turning away disgusted and hurt*)

Then all I got to say is you don't know when you've been insulted!

HATTIE

Mal, if you'd only calm down and let me explain.

MAL

Explain! Explain why you were in his arms; why you were letting him kiss you; why you were laughing about it?

HATTIE (*distractedly*)

But he didn't mean anything wrong!

MAL

Now I know what you two been up to—taking those auto rides.

HATTIE

I won't let you talk that way!

MAL

Listen, I ain't started! That kind of a guy thinks every actress is just a tart, and you're proving it!

HATTIE

Stop! Mal, stop!

MAL (*cruelly*)

If you had the brains of a gnat, you'd know there's only one thing that kind want of a girl!

HATTIE

Is that so?

MAL

You're damned right it's so! It's a wonder you didn't get Ed to give him a bunk here in the car.

HATTIE

Now, wait a minute and listen to me. (*Suppressing her indignation.*) How would you like to know that Mr. Wampler asked me to marry him?

MAL (*sitting weakly on edge of table*)

Marry you?

HATTIE

Right here not ten minutes ago.

MAL (*breathlessly*)

Why, the dirty crook!

HATTIE

He's not a crook! He's more of a gentleman than you are.

MAL

That's it! Now you're showing how you feel.

HATTIE (*fighting back the tears*)

He'd never talk to me like you do.

MAL

No, he's smooth! (*Brokenly.*) And—all this time you've been sneaking him kisses behind my back.

HATTIE

But, Mal, you're crazy, you know it's you I love!

MAL

I wouldn't believe you on a stack of Bibles! (*Piteously.*) My God, and all the things we were going to

do. I was going to have my own company some day.
I was going to star you!

HATTIE

You were going to star me? That's good, that's good!

MAL

Yes, I had ambitions for you. What do you suppose I've been sticking around with this turkey all this time for?

HATTIE

I suppose you blame that on me.

MAL

You bet I do!

HATTIE

I suppose you think it's been just a bed of roses for me, too. All my life I've been living out of a trunk, playing in halls and skating rinks, one-horse theatres—under canvas and over livery stables; eating in bum joints that wasn't fit for a dog! I've never complained, but maybe I've got ambitions, too. Maybe there's things I want like a porch and a rocking chair, and a bath tub, and a bed that stands still in one spot and that belongs to me! I want a home.

MAL

All right! All right, he'll give you a home!

HATTIE

Yes, he would!

MAL

He's welcome to you now that I've found out your nothing but a common gold digger!

HATTIE

I'm warning you, Mal, you'd better quit!

MAL

I'm quitting right now. Go ahead, take him!

HATTIE

Be careful, Mal!

MAL

Go on, take him! See how you like it marrying outside the profession—sitting home nights reading a Sears-Roebuck catalogue! Yes, and I'll tell you something else—

(CONNIE enters, right.)

CONNIE (to MAL)

Listen, Mr. Wampler and all of us can hear every word—!

(Enter LEON, TRACEY, LORNA, GRACE and DAVE.)

MAL

I want you to hear!

LEON

You leave Hat be! She's tryin' to help us—help us all!

LORNA

And the Lord knows we need it.

MAL (*desperately*)

Now, listen, Hat—

TRACEY (*coming between them*)

Aw, stop bein' a big slob! Hat's tryin' to do something for her friends.

HATTIE (*hysterically*)

Sure I am! Sure I am!

(WAMPLER *enters, right.*)

WAMPLER

Say, what's the idea of this pow-wow? Did you want me to wait, Hattie?

MAL (*advancing to him*)

Yes, I want you to wait! I want you to hear this. If she marries you to feather her nest, she's goin' to get just what's comin' to her, and—

HATTIE (*to WAMPLER*)

He don't know what he's saying!

MAL

Oh, yes I do! And I mean every word of it!

(HATTIE *looks at MAL a moment, then turns to WAMPLER.*)

HATTIE (*with deliberation*)

Mr. Wampler, you asked me—to marry you. Well, I'm sayin' yes to you—

WAMPLER (*hardly believing his ears*)

You *will*!

(*The others stare at her aghast.*)

HATTIE (*defiantly*)

Yes! And I'm quittin' the stage for good.

WAMPLER (*delighted*)

Well, now you're talkin' business!

TRACEY

Say, what is this—a shot-gun affair?

(*The others clutter around WAMPLER and HATTIE with utterances of surprise and congratulations.*)

CONNIE

You're gettin' one swell little girlie.

LORNA

I do hope you'll be happy.

WAMPLER

Well, the old batch is caught at last? When'll we have it, Hattie?

HATTIE (*her eyes on MAL*)

Any time you say!

WAMPLER

Then, this afternoon. Never put off till tomorrow what you can put over today!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

Same as Scene One. The car is partially decorated for the wedding; faded red, white and blue bunting has been hung across the berths.

Time: Afternoon of the same day.

At Rise: GRACE is engaged in tidying up the car; TRACEY is tacking up the last of the bunting; LORNA is cutting bread in preparation for the wedding supper; ERNEST is tacking up a placard which reads: "Wishing you a Long Run Together."

LORNA (*as she works*)

Well, as I was saying, when Leon and me got married, business was so terrible the manager had us get married on the stage to see if it wouldn't bring in the crowd.

TRACEY

Did it pull 'em?

LORNA

Did it! And every store in town donated wedding presents.

TRACEY

Yeah, I know! And took 'em back right after the show!

(LEON enters, right, with a property cake of ice, one of those that Eliza crosses on in their production.)

LEON

You all been wantin' a pulpit for the ceremony?
How about these prop cakes of ice?

TRACEY

It's going to be a hot wedding!

LEON

There's enough out there so's we can make an aisle
for 'em to walk up.

GRACE

It'd be a grand pulpit, Leon, if anybody had a
Bible—

LEON

There's one under Lorna's pillow. Get it for her,
Lorna.

(LORNA fetches Bible from her berth.)

LORNA

Leon swiped it last month when we stopped at the
Central House.

(ERNEST exits, right.)

GRACE

It's one of them Gideons, ain't it?

LORNA

Yes.

TRACEY

Well, they will leave them things loose in the rooms—
(WAMPLER enters, left, carrying a bunch of flowers.
He appears to be better groomed than in the pre-
vious scene.) Where's Hattie?

TRACEY (*cordially*)

Hello, Mr. Wampler.

WAMPLER

Where is she? Ain't she back *yet*?

LORNA (*putting bread and knife in cupboard*)

Wasn't she with you?

WAMPLER

No. I went down to the hotel and got a shave and my suit pressed. Wonder where she got to?

GRACE

Oh, you needn't be afraid of losing her, Mr. Wampler.

(ERNEST *enters with one of the old parade standards bearing the inscription: "Big Show Tonight." He proceeds to tack it up against the berths.*)

TRACEY

Yeah, she's too smart to pass up a good thing like you.

WAMPLER (*chuckling*)

Glad you think I'm appreciated—(*Looking around.*) Say, you got it to look real fancy around here. But, gosh, I don't see why Hat wanted to get married in a show car.

TRACEY

Lorna wanted her to do that.

LORNA

Well, I told Hat she'd oughta make it a sort of home wedding. (*simply*) You see, it's where she lives—

WAMPLER

Well, I was for going to the preacher's house, and doing it up right.

GRACE

We couldn't had any fun there.

LEON (*who has just entered with another cake of property ice which he places on top of the other.*)

Here, we can do it up right. And with mother, there, fixin' the cats the troupe'll have a party for our last night together that we'll all remember.

LORNA (*desolately*)

Yes, we break up and all separate after tonight, don't we?

GRACE (*sighing*)

I hate to think about it.

LEON

Well, there's got to be an end to everything.
(*Exits, right.*)

LORNA (*smiling at him*)

Well, we got Mr. Wampler to thank for the happy finale.

WAMPLER

Well, I wanta do the right thing. You see I don't get married *every* day in the year—(*Hands bunch of flowers to LORNA.*) Oh, here's some flowers you can stick 'round the place.

(*LORNA places flowers in vases.*)

GRACE (*to WAMPLER*)

We got the cut-glass bowl for Hat, too. It was nice of you to help us buy that.

WAMPLER

Oh, that's nothing! Wait till Hattie tells you how I fixed you up. (*The others murmur their gratitude.*) It's a good thing for you, I'm here! (*Looking at watch.*) But say, if Hattie don't come down and sign the marriage license with me soon there won't be a wedding,

LEON (*entering with red paper Christmas bell*)

Mother, here's something I found in a property crate.

LORNA

That'll be fine.

GRACE

See if you can fix it over where they'll stand.

LEON

You do it, Tracey. (*Chuckling.*) I'm busy delivering ice. (*LEON exits.*)

TRACEY (*grumbling—starts putting it above the improvised altar*)

A bell! You got this place now lookin' like the openin' of a cafeteria!

(*Enters CONNIE, left, with large sack of groceries.*)

CONNIE (*excitedly*)

Well, for a bunch of stranded troupers I'll say we're shootin' high! This is going to be *my* idea of a party, believe me!

GRACE

What did you get?

CONNIE (*taking out packages, one at a time, from the sack*)

Potato chips, chocolate cake, peanut brittle, hot dogs, sweet pickles, cream cheese and corn-beef. I got it all for three-ninety. (*To WAMPLER.*) That leaves a dollar ten outa the finuf you gave me. And here's your change, Mr. Wampler.

WAMPLER

Oh, don't bother about it.

CONNIE (*pocketing money*)

No bother at all!

WAMPLER (*looking again at watch*)

It's getting late. (*Moving toward end of car.*) When Hattie shows up you hold her here; I gotta go get our drawing-room. You know, we're leaving on the seven-two for Hot Springs, Arkansaw.

LEON

Hot Springs! (*Reminiscently.*) I played there once with "A Wife in Name Only."

WAMPLER (*turning to CONNIE and patting her*)

I bet you'd like to be going there on *your* honeymoon?

CONNIE (*not to be caught napping*)

No, thanks. I always go to Niagara Falls for mine.
(WAMPLER *laughs and goes out, left.*)

LORNA

You know, we oughta have some rice to throw at them.

GRACE

Rice! Sure we had—I'll go get some. (*Taking her coat from her berth.*) You got some of his change left, haven't you, Connie?

CONNIE

Yeah, and I'm going to keep it. Run after him and make your own touch. It's *his* wedding.

GRACE

All right.
(GRACE *hurries off, left.*)

LORNA (*after a moment*)

I hope Mal ain't taking it too much to heart.

LEON

Well, it's none of our business, mother.

CONNIE

Hat knows what she's doing.

TRACEY (*lighting his pipe*)

She's got more sense than all of you.

(*HATTIE enters, left, looking rather forlorn.*)

CONNIE

Where on earth have you been hiding yourself?

LEON

Mr. Wampler's been looking all over for you.

HATTIE (*quietly*)

I've been taking a walk.

TRACEY (*nudging LEON*)

Walkin' around alone when she's goin' to be married
in a half-hour—

HATTIE

Well, why not, if I felt like it?

TRACEY

It's all right with me, only Mr. Wampler—

HATTIE

I'm here in plenty of time— He's been mighty nice
to you all. He's going to give me a check—enough
to fix you all up fine.

TRACEY

He's a great guy! You don't know how lucky you
are.

HATTIE (*eagerly*)

Am I, Tracey?

CONNIE

Say, Hat, you ain't said nothing about the decorations?

LEON (*pointing to ice cakes*)

And my pulpit.

HATTIE (*feigning appreciation*)

Yes, it's fine. It's nice of you all to do it.

ERNEST (*sotto voce*)

Wouldn't this be a good time to give her our wedding presents?

LEON

We ought to save it till just before the ceremony.

HATTIE

Wedding present—?

CONNIE

No, let's give it to her now. I wanta read her the poetry I wrote.

HATTIE

Say, you didn't go and spend your money on me?

LORNA

Well, we all chipped in a little.

HATTIE

Mal, too?

LEON

No—we didn't ask him— Mr. Wampler paid for most of it.

(LORNA *unwraps a large cut-glass punch bowl and places it on the table.*)

LORNA (*proudly*)

How'll that look on your sideboard, Mrs. Wampler?

TRACEY (*noticing CONNIE'S eagerness*)

Go on, Connie—get it over with.

CONNIE (*reading from card*)

“We’re closing and saying good-bye, dear Hat,
And it’s good luck to you wherever you’re at,
Since Cupid’s dart has hit you
Best wishes and love go with you.
As the fourth little Eva of the Hartley family,
You were great in the role;
So accept from your loving friends of the Bondell
U. T. C. Company, this cut-glass bowl.”
(*There is a murmur of approval from the others.*)

HATTIE (*touched*)

That’s real beautiful, Connie!

LORNA (*to ERNEST*)

I don’t see how she ever made all that up.

CONNIE

Well, it ain’t so bad. I had an awful time getting something to rhyme with glass-bowl. I thought I’d have to ask the gang to change to some other present.

LEON (*clapping*)

Speech from Hattie!

(*The others take up his suggestion.*)

HATTIE (*after a pause—embarrassed; but with genuine sincerity*)

Well, I hardly know what to say to you all. Of course, you know I thank you. (*Indicating bowl.*)

And, I'll always keep that thing to remember you by. Maybe we won't see much more of one another after tonight. Some of us may never see each other again—and I'm going to miss you—in the worst way. . . Of course, we may have had our little fights now and again, but underneath it all there isn't one of you that hasn't got his heart in the right place, and that I can't call my friend. I'm going to be lonely—lonelier than you know—but I'm going through with it and I want to tell you that when I go to live in that fine home, I want you to come and see me; and whenever you're trouping around here, I'll be looking for you. My home is going to be open to you—whether you're working or laying off—whether you got it or whether you ain't—particularly if you ain't. (*Choking up.*) That's how I want you to feel. . . all of you.

CONNIE (*on the verge of tears*)

God, she's great, ain't she?

(*All are affected by her words.*)

HATTIE (*trying to laugh*)

Say, you'd think this was a funeral!

(*Lorna comes forward with an evening gown, which has been hanging near the window.*)

LORNA

Look, Hat dear, your dress I fixed for you.

HATTIE

Where'd you find that?

LORNA

In your trunk. I just pressed it.

HATTIE

Oh, this dress is all right.

CONNIE

To be married in!

LEON

Go on, Hat. The preacher'll be here soon—

TRACEY

And Wampler's been hollerin' about the license.

LORNA (*leading the way to wash-room, left*)

You wanta look your best, don't you? . . Come on.

CONNIE (*opening door for HATTIE*)

Believe me, when I got married I had everything on but the break of day!

HATTIE (*reluctantly*)

Well, all right.

LORNA

We can go in there—I'll help you.

HATTIE

Oh, what's all the rush?

(HATTIE *exits, left, with* LORNA.)

LEON

Did you ever hear anything more beautiful than her speech?

TRACEY

All I got to say is she ain't the happiest bride I ever saw.

CONNIE

What do you expect with everything on the fritz—the troupe's bustin' up and—

ERNEST (*looking at his watch*)

Say, we're supposed to have a wedding here in fifteen minutes, and they ain't got their license yet. I'm going to find Wampler and tell him Hat's here.

TRACEY

Yes, go on, do that.

(*ERNEST crosses to door, right. As door is opened a noise is heard off as if someone were knocking trunks around.*)

ERNEST (*yelling off stage*)

Hey, what are you fellows doing anyway?

(*LEON crosses to door to see what is causing the commotion.*)

MAL (*off stage*)

Mind your business!

(*ERNEST exits, right.*)

LEON (*in doorway, to CONNIE*)

Say, it's Mal and Dave. They've opened up the old wardrobe trunk and got a lot of stuff on the floor.

(*MAL enters, right—goes to ED's berth—fusses around under it for a minute or two as if hunting*

for something. He finally locates a dozen or more old photographs and several bundles of lithographs.)

MAL (*to DAVE, who is off stage*)

I've got 'em, Dave!

DAVE (*entering*)

Good boy!

CONNIE

Hey, what the heck are you doing? Playing puss in the corner?

TRACEY (*croaking*)

No—he thinks he's an ostrich!

MAL

Don't ask questions and you won't get an impolite answer.

DAVE

Want me to give you a hand, Mal?

MAL (*giving some of the bundles to DAVE*)

Yeah—take an armful of these.

(*DAVE runs off, right.*)

TRACEY

Well, what's all the mystery?

MAL

I'll tell you when I get good and ready.

CONNIE

I hope so. (*MAL follows DAVE out, left. GRACE has entered and has heard the last few words of MAL'S.*)

She carries a bag of rice.) What do you suppose he's ravin' about?

TRACEY

He don't know—the poor cluck!

GRACE (*excitedly*)

Well, *I* got something to tell you! I was buying this rice over at the A. and P.—I told the fellow what it was for—for the wedding, you know—and he asked me who was getting married, and when I mentioned Mr. Wampler he said Mr. Wampler used to be a good customer of his when he had charge of the A. and P. branch in Hiawatha, and that he knew him well.

TRACEY (*impatiently*)

Well, what about it?

GRACE

Well, here's what about it! He said Mr. Wampler's an *undertaker*!

CONNIE

A what!

TRACEY

An undertaker!

LEON

What's that? (*Stunned*) Who's an undertaker?

GRACE

He is. Mr. Wampler!

LEON

He said he was a furniture dealer.

GRACE

He is—furniture dealer and undertaker, too.

TRACEY (*snapping his fingers*)

I might have guessed it! In these tank towns the two go together. Well, ain't Hat the sly one not to tip us off to *that*?

LEON

Maybe she don't know about it.

CONNIE (*starting to door*)

Well, I'm going to ask her.

TRACEY

I wouldn't do that. If she didn't know about it, it's liable to spoil everything.

GRACE

Stay here, Connie.

CONNIE

Just the same, if I was going to marry an undertaker I sure would want to know about it.

TRACEY

Can you imagine visiting her?

CONNIE (*shuddering*)

Yeah, sittin' in the parlor with a stiff!

TRACEY

You know what I think—!

(Enters ORIOLE, right.)

CONNIE

Nix! Not in front of the mocking bird!

ORIOLE

Say—ain't they ever going to have the weddin'?

(She has a box of animal crackers in her hand and her mouth full.)

(HATTIE enters from wash-room wearing her "wedding gown.")

HATTIE *(seeing that ORIOLE is eating)*

Hey, there—you eating again? Where you been?

ORIOLE

With Mal.

HATTIE *(taking the box from her)*

Animal crackers!

ORIOLE

Sure—there ain't no more left. I got 'em from Mr. Bratton.

HATTIE

Who's Mr. Bratton?

ORIOLE *(edging towards the package of frankfurters)*

He's a friend of Mal's and he's a lawyer, and he runs the K. and P. society and—

TRACEY

A friend of Mal's in this town?

ORIOLE (*taking frankfurter*)

Yeah, he's got a big gold watch and an elephant's tooth on his watch-chain, and Mal says he's the chief Ro-ta-tary of the whole town. You're all dressed up, ain't you, Hat, for the wedding?

HATTIE (*slapping frankfurter out of ORIOLE's hand*)

I never saw such a kid for sticking anything she can get in her mouth!

CONNIE (*picking up frankfurter*)

Don't eat them things raw! They give you worms.

ORIOLE

Ain't you ever going to have the weddin', Hat?
I'm tired waiting.

CONNIE (*mockingly*)

Ain't she the little dear?

HATTIE

Well she's interested; she's never seen a real wedding.

ORIOLE

I never even saw my own mother's weddin'. (*Peering off, left.*) Look Hat, there comes Mr. Wampler. Mal said I could throw my old shoes at him. Can I, Hat?

HATTIE

No, you cannot!

(*WAMPLER enters. All except HATTIE are very deferential toward him.*)

WAMPLER (*to HATTIE*)

Well, there you are. At last! Don't you know we got the license man waiting? He's got to have your John Hancock before it's legal.

HATTIE

I've been getting dressed.

WAMPLER

You look pretty as a peach. Come on—we just got time to get over there and back.

(WAMPLER *takes* HATTIE'S coat from her berth and helps her into it.)

TRACEY

How about the preacher?

WAMPLER

I 'phoned him. He said he'd start over in ten minutes.

GRACE (*it's now or never*)

Oh, what business did you say you was in. Mr. Wampler?

HATTIE

Why, the furniture business. (*to Wampler*) Isn't it?

WAMPLER

Yes—yes—of course—

(WAMPLER *hurriedly exits, left, pushing* HATTIE *before him.*)

GRACE

Ain't that nice? She can get all the furniture and everything she needs for nothing.

CONNIE (*looking after them*)

Like hearses and coffins! (*Greatly perturbed.*)
She don't know a thing about him being an undertaker.

GRACE

It's up to somebody to tell her.

CONNIE

All right, Grace—you tell her, I ain't got the heart.

MAL (*offstage, right*)

After you load that truck, come right back here.
Come on, Dave.

(*All look in the direction of MAL'S voice. MAL enters, followed by DAVE.*)

MAL (*over his shoulder, to DAVE*)

It's about time to spring the big news on 'em.

CONNIE

What news?

MAL

I didn't want to say anything about it till it was all set and under way, but the sale is on and there's a line-up at the box-office.

TRACEY

Box-office! What the hell are you raving about?

MAL

That we're going to give a show tonight right here in this town.

TRACEY

Why, there ain't even a theatre in this town!

DAVE

There's a hall and a big one—the K. of P.

LEON

You hired a hall?

GRACE

Shut up—let him tell it.

MAL

A few hours ago I went out of here with my mind made up to do something. Well, pretty soon I found myself in front of a big wooden building.

DAVE

The K. of P. Hall.

MAL

Yeah, it looked kind of like a theatre, and there standing in front I noticed a big fat fellow.

DAVE

Yeah, Mr. Bratton. Gee, he's a great guy!

MAL

Yeah, and this Mr. Bratton, he was telling another man about how destitute the poor sufferers are and I felt sorry for them.

CONNIE

You mean sorry for *us*.

DAVE

No—the flood sufferers!

MAL

Sure. Why, for miles up and down Snake River poor people's homes are being washed away—women and little children are out in the cold with no covering at all. Then, the idea come to me—

DAVE

I'll say it did!

MAL

I told this Mr. Bratton about our troupe being ready to give a show with everything here and the hall all ready for it.

DAVE

And Mal said we'd play a benefit.

TRACEY

A benefit!

MAL (*to the others*)

Yeah, I knew you'd do that, wouldn't you?

OMNES

Sure! Of course we would.

DAVE

Then, this guy says why don't you give a benefit for yourselves.

MAL (*ingenuously*)

Sure, but I told him we didn't need it.

TRACEY (*bristling*)

Oh, you did!

MAL

Yes, I did! Not as much as *those* poor people.

(TRACEY *starts to argue this point with* MAL.)

CONNIE

Shut up, will you, Tracey! Go on, Mal.

MAL

Then I thought of this idea to give *half* the receipts to the flood sufferers and keep half for ourselves.

TRACEY (*mollified*)

Well that's better.

DAVE

Yeah.

MAL

Then, he told us if we'd get the lithos and photographs for the front of the house that he'd get the printer to turn out some handbills inside of an hour, and he did. (*Turing to* DAVE.) He must be a rich fella.

DAVE

I'll bet he spent over twenty dollars already on printin' stuff.

LEON (*flabbergasted*)

I wouldn't believe it.

TRACEY (*suddenly*)

I was quittin' today.

MAL

Well, you won't if I let you have a little advance.

TRACEY

Where is it?

MAL (*pulling out roll of bills*)

Here's two dollars.

(*All look at MAL in amazement.*)

TRACEY

Where'd *you* get that money?

MAL (*easily*)

Mr. Bratton thought I might need some—Say listen, they've got a sale of over twenty-seven dollars now.

LORNA

Good Lord, that's wonderful! Do we get half?

DAVE

Fifty-fifty.

LEON

You're sure it's all right, Mal? Remember, the outfit belongs to Ed.

DAVE

No, it don't! Not any more.

TRACEY

Why don't it?

MAL

Because now it belongs to the company, and *I* own most of it.

(MAL hugs ORIOLE, who from the first has been watching her hero, starry-eyed.)

TRACEY

How is that?

MAL

This big lawyer, Mr. Bratton, figured it out for me. I told him the amounts of the salaries due and he showed me Ed owed us more than the outfit's worth, and the company can hold it till we get paid back every cent. Show 'em the handbills, Dave.

DAVE (*handing out small colored throwaways*)

O. K.

TRACEY

But how do *you* own most of it?

MAL

Because I ain't seen salary for a longer time than any two of you.

LEON (*puzzled*)

Sounds reasonable enough.

TRACEY (*reading bill*)

It says here—Mal Thorne's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" company.

MAL

Yeah, I told Mr. Bratton to put that there.

CONNIE

Oh, you did!

MAL

Sure. Since it was all my idea and there is more money owed me than anybody else, I *ought* to be the manager.

GRACE

I'll say you're the manager!

ORIOLE

Bet your sox he is—boss 'em, Mal!

MAL (*good naturedly*)

I'm doing it, ain't I?

ORIOLE (*to DAVE who is still distributing handbills*)

Can I see one?

DAVE

Sure.

LEON (*to LORNA*)

I didn't know Mal had it in him.

MAL (*who has overheard LEON*)

You know it now, don't you?

ORIOLE (*reading bill*)

I see *my* name!

MAL

Sure, kid.

TRACEY

You're not going to let the kid play Eva!
(*The others are equally astonished.*)

MAL

I sure am! She's a born trouper.

CONNIE

Say, will somebody pinch me to see if I'm conscious?
(DAVE *takes her literally and pinches her.*)

GRACE

Well, Mal, what about Hat?

MAL

She's getting married.

CONNIE

You know how Hat feels about Oriole acting. She'll never let you do it.

MAL

Oh, yes she will. I'll show her.

ORIOLE

And *am* I going to act tonight, Mal?

MAL

You sure are, kid. And the way I boosted you up around this town you'd better be good, too. I told 'em you were an infant prodigy.

ORIOLE

What's that?

MAL

Huh?—Why it's—well it's hard to explain to you.

LEON

Does she know the part?

MAL

She knows it backwards.

TRACEY (*grouchily*)

That's just the way she'll play it.

DAVE (*who can't keep the news any longer*)

Mal, ain't you going to tell 'em nothing about the parade?

MAL

Oh, sure—didn't I tell you about that?
(*This news sets them all to buzzing.*)

LEON

We going to parade?

MAL

I'll say we're going to parade.

CONNIE

I'd never believed it!

TRACEY

Oh, for the love of Mike!

LEON

When?

LORNA

Well what do you know about that!

MAL

You've always been kidding me about wanting a parade. Well, we're going to have one, right down the main stem—headed by a swell auto and a band.

CONNIE

You don't mean a real band?

MAL

Well, the Fife and Drum Corps from the Asylum.

TRACEY (*thinking that MAL should be there himself*)
Asy-lum!

MAL

Yeah, the colored orphan asylum. Mr. Bratton got 'em and he's givin' me his auto for Oriole. Oh, Ernest, go over and tell that garage man I want that bloodhound back. (ERNEST *hurries off, right.*) Dave, you get the uniforms ready—those things we pulled out of the wardrobe box. (MAL *takes off his coat and throws it in his bunk. He starts tearing down the red, white and blue bunting.*)

DAVE (*running off, right*)

O. K.

TRACEY

Well, all I got to say is I never heard of anything like it in all my life.
(*He goes out, right.*)

LEON (*going off, right*)

It'll be like old times to march again.
(HATTIE *enters, left, followed by WAMPLER. She has one of the handbills.*)

HATTIE (*angrily*)

Say! What is this I'm seeing all around the town?

CONNIE

Have you heard about it, Hat?

ORIOLE (*running to her sister*)

Hat, Mal says I can ride in the parade and act tonight.

HATTIE

Act! Why, what on earth is he thinking about—?

WAMPLER

You're giving a show tonight?

MAL (*nastily*)

Yeah—what have you got to say about it?

WAMPLER

Well—just this—Hattie can't be in it.

MAL

Oh—is that so!

WAMPLER

Yes—that's so. She's promised me to quit the stage. She's retired.

MAL

Well then, that's the way it *is*. She's going to marry you. I've got my actress.

ORIOLE (*gleefully*)

You bet you have.

HATTIE

Why didn't you ask me to play?

WAMPLER

Because he knew I wouldn't let you.

ORIOLE

I'm going to play Eva. And I'm a *prodigy*.

HATTIE

You're a what?

CONNIE

He's taking her to play your part, Hat.

HATTIE

He's taking—? What right has he to—?

(DAVE enters, right, bringing in an arm load of red and yellow parade uniforms and high hats.)

DAVE

I'll tell you what right he's got. He's the manager of this troupe.

HATTIE

He's the manager—!

MAL

Yeah—both of us doing well ain't we? Me a manager, and you marrying this great guy and honey-mooning to Hot Springs—funny, ain't it?

WAMPLER

I don't see anything so funny about it.

HATTIE

I don't care—I can't have Oriole in show business—I can't!

CONNIE

Hat, you wouldn't refuse to let Oriole play one show for them flood sufferers.

HATTIE

But I don't want her trouping.

LEON

You got to do it this time for our sake.

HATTIE

I can't.

GRACE

You wouldn't want to throw us all out of work just because you—

ORIOLE

Please, Hattie!

LORNA

Just for tonight.

CONNIE

Oh, Hat, be fair.

HATTIE

Well, you know I don't want to keep the troupe from showing.

CONNIE

Of course you don't.

HATTIE (*after a moment*)

All right, go ahead.

CONNIE

Good for you, Hat!

LEON

I knew she'd give in.

LORNA

Hat, she'll be awful good in the part.

MAL

Now listen, folks, we all gotta hustle. There's a lot of work to do before we'll be in shape to give a show. I and Dave have got most of the props and effects down at the hall, but we need a rehearsal for Oriole. We'll have a company rehearsal on stage at six—and all of you be there on the dot.

WAMPLER

Wait a minute! Do you realize you're interfering with our wedding party?

(ERNEST enters, right, with the bloodhound, VIOLET is wearing her old parade blanket.)

MAL *(seeing the dog)*

Yeah! Oh, Ernest, you got the hound.

ERNEST

The garage man's a gentleman. He says everybody in town wants to help.

MAL

Good! Dave, you better give the girls their uniforms.

DAVE

O. K.

(DAVE distributes hats and uniforms to LORNA, CONNIE and GRACE.)

MAL

Now get into them all of you. (*They do so. Consulting card.*) And you fall in line in the following order. First comes the auto with Oriole in full costume on top of a soap box—Mr. Bratton driving. Next the fife and drum corps—then the company—single file—eight feet apart, and see that you hold it! Dave, I want you at the head of 'em with that banner. (*Pointing to banner: "Big Show Tonight".*) You better line up now. First, comes Lorna, then Leon, Connie, Tracey, then you, Grace—Ernest, you bring up the rear with Violet.

TRACEY

Ain't you going to be in it?
(*By this time they are all busily putting on their parade coats and hats.*)

MAL

I sure am! I took this band coat for me.

DAVE

Is that so? So did I!

MAL

I'm in the front, setting in the auto with Oriole.

TRACEY

No—you wouldn't walk!
(*Sounds of the approach of the Orphan Asylum fife and drum corps coming down the street.*)

ORIOLE (*running to window*)

Look at that crowd out there, followin' the band!
They're coming to see me!
(*She squeals with delight.*)

LEON

We'd like to wait for the wedding, Hat, but it's our bread and butter.

HATTIE (*hurt*)

Don't mind me.

LORNA (*trying to be nice*)

There's an extra uniform, Hat, if you want to come along.

WAMPLER

Oh, no, she won't! She's quit the business. I'm not goin' to have her walk the streets—like a street-walker!

(*The drums outside grow louder.*)

MAL (*busily.*)

Come on, fall in line, ready to march! When we get off this car we got to make a showing. (*Pointing off, right.*) Oriole, hike out there and get into your sister's angel-clothes. Dave, you bring the company along with you. (*ORIOLE rushes off, right.*) I'm going ahead to decorate the auto with this *wedding junk*. (*Glares maliciously at WAMPLER.*)

(*There is heard the noise of the townspeople gathering outside the car.*)

WAMPLER

Say, hold on! We're gettin' married at five o'clock.

MAL

That's too damn bad. You're going to miss the parade! (*MAL exits, left.*)

LORNA

How about the wedding, Hat?

LEON (*to HATTIE*)

You know we don't like to leave you. . . .

HATTIE (*stunned*)

Oh, that's all right. . . .

DAVE (*taking down banner from berth, right*)

We'll see you later, Hat. (*DAVE takes his stand at the head of the others, banner in hand.*) Come on, gang! Line up! Now, throw back your shoulders. (*They fall into line obediently.*) All right—mark time! Left—right. Left—right. Forward—march! (*The company proudly marches out of the car, heads up, shoulders erect, with ERNEST bringing up the rear with the blanketed VIOLET on a leash.*)

(*Off stage sounds of shouts and applause as they join the fife and drum corps. HATTIE runs to the window and presses her nose against the screen watching them.*)

WAMPLER (*after a moment*)

Well, your great friends have left you flat. Now what do we do?

HATTIE (*distractedly*)

We'll have to postpone the wedding, that's all.

WAMPLER

Postpone!

HATTIE

Yes, I can't leave now—they'll be needing me around here.

WAMPLER

Oh, I guess they can get along without you—and besides you're through with the theatre business—you promised me.

HATTIE (*beside herself*)

Yes—yes—

(ORIOLE comes tripping on, right. She wears HATTIE's angel costume.)

ORIOLE

Your wig'll fit, Hat, if I tie the ribbon tight. Fix my dress—it's too long.

HATTIE (*to WAMPLER, as she goes to ORIOLE's aid*)

Well, my sister'll need me. I can't leave her to-night. I got to watch her. 'Specially if she's going to act.

WAMPLER (*suspiciously*)

Say, are you trying to get rid of me?

HATTIE

Why, no, of course not. We can be married to-morrow.

WAMPLER

Well, but listen—

HATTIE (*firmly*)

We've got to wait till to-morrow.

WAMPLER

But the minister?

HATTIE

Tell him it's postponed. I simply can't be married to-day.

WAMPLER (*reluctantly*)

Well, all right. I'll see you for supper?

HATTIE

Yes, yes, for supper.

ORIOLE (*squealing with excitement*)

Fix my dress, Hat, it's too long!

WAMPLER

Well, then maybe I better cancel that drawing-room. No use paying for it if we're not going to use it.

(WAMPLER goes out left, as he exits he bumps into MAL who enters.)

MAL (*impatiently*)

The Fife and Drum Corps waiting to start! Oriole, haven't you got that dress fixed yet?

ORIOLE (*getting up on table so that HATTIE can pin dress*)

Hurry up, Hat!

HATTIE (*stopping, in her anger*)

Listen, I'm not the wardrobe woman—not yet!

(To MAL)

You did this on purpose! You cooked up this whole crazy scheme just to put a crimp in things.

MAL

Don't be ridiculous.

HATTIE

Understand this—you can't have Oriole but just this once!

ORIOLE

That's all you know about it.

HATTIE (*ignoring ORIOLE*)

I won't have her in this rotten business. She'll turn out just like me.

MAL

If she turns out like you she'll run off with the first man that shoves a wad of bills under her nose.

ORIOLE (*practising bowing to an imaginary audience*)

No, I won't. I'm going to stick to you, Mal.

MAL (*helping with ORIOLE's dress*)

Will you stand still, Oriole? You're worse than a grasshopper! Got any more pins?
(*Drums off, left, give assembly call.*)

ORIOLE (*taking pins from her mouth*)

Here's a lot of 'em.

(*Fife and drum corps begin a lively march tune.*)

MAL

There's the band! We're holding up the parade!
I gotta keep faith with my public.

ORIOLE

Hurry up, Hat! You wait till you see what a good actor I'll be.

HATTIE (*at the breaking point*)

I won't have it, I tell you! I won't have it!

MAL

You'll feel different when you see Oriole's face on every billboard and ash can.

HATTIE (*hysterically*)

Oh stop! Stop!

ORIOLE

Don't worry, Hat. I'll go trouping and you can get married to Mr. Wampler in his house and I'll make money and send it to you.

HATTIE

I won't have her in show business!

(*With a burst of fury HATTIE tears the angel costume from ORIOLE—leaving her standing on the table in her woolen union suit. HATTIE drops into chair to the right of the table, crying. ORIOLE seeing her predicament dances up and down on the table in a rage.*)

MAL (*tearing his hair*)

Oh, Hat—you shouldn't have done that! We'll never be ready!

(*DAVE rushes on, left.*)

DAVE

Hurry up, Mal! We gotta start!

(*DAVE rushes out again.*)

MAL

You're going to look like hell in the parade but we got no time to stop now!

MAL (*grabs ORIOLE from the table and runs off, left, ORIOLE crying loudly.*)

HATTIE (*running frantically to window*)

No! No! No!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

Setting: The troupe's improvised dressing room, K. of P. Hall, Centralia, Kansas.

It is a room directly off of the stage of the auditorium, and is used by the lodge members as a committee room. The furniture is of the type usually found in the halls of fraternal orders. The rear wall contains two high shuttered windows, which look down upon the street below. Between the windows a rostrum, upon which stands the Supreme Chancellor's throne chair. A door, right, opens directly on the stage. When the door is open one can see a portion of a wood wing and the glare of the footlights in reflection. Another door, left, leads to a corridor.

Each member of the troupe is represented by his suit-case; these are scattered about the room at intervals, open and surrounded by piles of street clothes, costumes, etc. There is a space screened off, upstage left, used as the "ladies' dressing room." Another screened off portion is used by the men as a dressing room. There are signs tacked on the screens to indicate this. Downstage, left, a mirror and make-up table. A large wardrobe trunk, center. A smaller trunk against screen up left.

Time: That night.

At Rise: HATTIE is standing at door, right, listening with undivided attention to the scene that is being

enacted on the stage. Offstage one can hear ORIOLE'S squeaky voice first, and then GRACE'S and then ERNEST'S. The performance is on. With each evidence of laughter or applause from the audience HATTIE shows signs of being in actual pain. As ORIOLE speaks her lines, HATTIE is seen to pronounce silently each syllable with her. But it is not a girl who is anxiously hoping that her sister is pleasing an audience. HATTIE is a woman who has been thrust aside for another. CONNIE is hurriedly dressing back of screen, left. DAVE is changing his clothes up right.

GRACE (*offstage*)

"But where has my little Eva been?"

ORIOLE (*offstage*)

"I've been with Uncle Tom. He sings such beautiful things—about the new Jerusalem, the bright angels and the land of Canaan."

ERNEST (*offstage*)

"I dare say, Pussy, it's much better than opera."

DAVE (*rushing off past HATTIE; he is late for a cue*)

Beg pardon, Hat!

(*Exits DAVE, right. HATTIE continues to watch scene offstage, repeating the lines almost audibly.*)

ORIOLE (*offstage*)

"Oh, yes, Papa! And Uncle Tom's going to teach them to me."

GRACE (*offstage*)

"How shiftless!"

ORIOLE (*offstage*)

"Oh, no Aunt Ophelia! Uncle Tom is not shiftless. I read to him from my Bible and he tells me what it means."

CONNIE (*hurrying past HATTIE*)

Too bad you ain't playin' tonight, Hattie, you'd just love that audience!

(*She goes out, right.*)

(*HATTIE glares after her for a moment, nervously pushes her hair back, starts to cross left.*)

GRACE (*offstage*)

"How shiftless! How can you let her?"

(*MAL, in Legree costume, enters followed by TRACEY, who closes door. TRACEY is in his Uncle Tom make-up. HATTIE turns away from MAL, hurt.*)

(*TRACEY is evidently impressed by MAL's importance and is as obsequious to him now as he was harsh in the first act.*)

TRACEY (*changing his clothes*)

Well, it's just the limit! How'd you happen to think of it?

MAL

Things come to me—

TRACEY

I'll say they do—biggest house I ever saw.

MAL (*going up right, takes off wig and moustache and putting on his overcoat*)

No more'n I expected.

TRACEY

As a manager you got Ed Bondell beat all hollow.

MAL

I guess I have at that—when I put my mind to it.

TRACEY

It's your parade that done it, Mal.

MAL

And the kid—and the benefit idea.

(DAVE enters from stage and closes the door. He rushes over to his satchel and begins to don a linen duster of southern planter, also sombrero.)

DAVE

Did you ever see anything like it in all your life?

MAL

Dave, you watch things—keep them running right.

DAVE

Where you going?

MAL

Out front in the box-office to count up. I'll be back in a couple of minutes.

DAVE *(nods toward HAT)*

Mal, why don't you and——

(MAL shakes his head "No" and exits.)

TRACEY

Well, the whole world's turned upside down—that guy a manager, Hat here layin' off, and Oriole out there knockin' 'em off their seats.

(ORIOLE, in the Eva costume and golden curls, runs on, right, flushed with her success.)

GRACE (as the door is opened, offstage)

"Well, Cousin, there may be some truth in that."

(ORIOLE closes door.)

ORIOLE (breathlessly)

Hat, get me a glass of water, and hurry up 'cause I got to go right on again.

TRACEY

Hello, Oriole.

HATTIE

You know where the water is. Go get it yourself.

ORIOLE

Well, you might do *something* while I'm playing your part.

TRACEY

I'll say you're a wonder at it, although you did step on one of my laughs, kid.

ORIOLE

One of *your* laughs. Listen, while I was on the stage they never gave you a tumble!

(ORIOLE exits left. DAVE laughs.)

TRACEY (meditatively)

I'm afraid she's getting a little spoiled.

HATTIE

Spoiled! They've ruined her for good!

DAVE

Well, Hat, she's got 'em eatin' right out of her hand.
Did you hear that applause she got on her exit?

HATTIE

I'm not deaf, am I?

(ORIOLE re-enters with glass of water which she is trying to gulp down as she runs across stage.)

ORIOLE

It's getting near the Eva cue, Hat.

HATTIE

Don't you think I know it!

ORIOLE *(to DAVE)*

Was my acting a surprise to you, Dave?

DAVE

I'll say! You couldn't surprise me no more if you went over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

HATTIE *(to ORIOLE)*

You going to stay here all night listening to how good you are? Come out here on the stage if you think you're an actress.

(She grabs ORIOLE none too gently, rushes her off and exits with her, leaving door open. Voices heard offstage, right.)

TRACEY

Hat's had her eyes glued on every move Oriole's made all night.



ORIOLE

Wait till they catch me in the deathbed scene. Watch 'em turn on the water works!

"EVA THE FIFTH"—ACT III—SCENE I

DAVE (*as he dresses*)

Well, wouldn't you be proud if your own sister was
—?

TRACEY

Proud! If you ask me all this whoopin' it up for
little sister's getting under her skin.

DAVE

Oh don't be a sap—you sap!
(*There is loud applause offstage.*)

TRACEY (*shutting door*)

Listen to 'em! Sounds like the Fourth of July.
(*Enter WAMPLER left. He carries a box of candy.*)

TRACEY

Oh, hello, Mr. Wampler.

WAMPLER

How are you. I haven't seen Hattie since supper
time—is she all right?

DAVE

Oh, she's fine! She'll be back in a minute. Too bad
about having to put off the wedding.

WAMPLER

Oh, I guess it can keep another day.

DAVE

Well, the parade and this big benefit comin' up all
so sudden—

WAMPLER

Yes, she's worried about Oriole.

TRACEY

Oh, Oriole can take care of herself all right.

WAMPLER

We'll have the wedding to-morrow, soon as this excitement is over—

TRACEY

I hope so, and we'll all be there with bells on.
(TRACEY *opens door to stage.*)

GRACE (*offstage*)

"Why cousin—you talk like a professor."
(*Exit TRACEY—closing door.*)

DAVE

What you got in the box?

WAMPLER

Oh, this is some candy—a present for Oriole. Will you give it to her with my congratulations?

DAVE (*taking candy box*)

Sure.

WAMPLER

What part you going to play now?

DAVE (*adjusting chin whiskers*)

I'm an old Southern planter. In case you don't know it, I play four characters in this opera.

WAMPLER (*astonished*)

Four!

DAVE

Yes, and if they keep on giving me many more parts I'll be playing two at the same time and talking to myself.

(Opens door to stage—HATTIE is seen in the doorway, her back to the stage, her eyes evidently fastened on Oriole offstage.)

GRACE *(offstage)*

"Why cousin, it seems to me that you—"

DAVE

Gangway, Hat!

(DAVE exits, as HATTIE enters and closes door.)

WAMPLER

I've been out there in front and that crowd is just going crazy over her.

HATTIE

They are? They didn't notice her voice ain't developed—that she's squeakin' her lines.

WAMPLER

No. They wouldn't know all the fine points like you do. You won't be able to keep her off the stage.

HATTIE *(turns to WAMPLER)*

She's going to school! She's going to learn something.

WAMPLER

If you like, I'll send Oriole to a boarding school in Kansas City. *(Pause.)* Then we could be alone for a while.

HATTIE (*looking at him strangely*)

Yes—but maybe I'd be lonesome without her.

WAMPLER

Oh, I'll keep you entertained. I won't ever leave you alone—except on lodge nights.

(*GRACE enters, right, to change from "Ophelia" to negro slave costume.*)

HATTIE (*distractedly*)

It's all going to be terribly different, isn't it?

WAMPLER

You'll be surprised how sociable they are in Hiawatha, once they know you. Of course, I wouldn't mention that you'd been an actor. People in our town have a sort of prejudice against it—That'll be a closed book to you from now on.

HATTIE

I suppose so.

WAMPLER

And then you can join the Baptist Church—

(*ERNEST enters, leaving door open. He has come in to change his costume from "Fletcher" to "St. Clare," which he does through the following scene.*)

ERNEST

The act's nearly over.

(*He puts down his gun, takes off his cap, wig, beard and coat and throws them up-stage, while looking through the door at the scene being played off-stage.*)

(*Scene being played offstage right during following dialogue between WAMPLER and GRACE.*)

TRACEY (*offstage*)

"Read that passage again, Miss Eva."

ORIOLE (*offstage*)

"And I saw a lake of glass mingled with fire. Good night, Uncle Tom."

TRACEY (*offstage*)

"Good night, Miss Eva."

GRACE (*in her step-ins, calling*)

Oh, Ernest! (*Seeing WAMPLER looking at her and backs behind screen.*) Hey, Mr. Wampler, don't you see I'm undressed?

WAMPLER

Yes, I do now that I notice it but I didn't think you cared—Mr. Beaumont's here.

GRACE

Well, he's different. He's one of the company.

WAMPLER

Well, then, I beg your pardon.

(*The scene offstage comes to an end and there is loud applause. The effect of a curtain being raised and lowered several times is seen on the backing. The piano is heard playing "Dixie."*)

WAMPLER (*turns to HATTIE who is being involuntarily drawn toward the applause*)

I'll come back after the performance for you, Hattie.

HATTIE (*hardly hearing him*)

Yes, come back after the performance.

(*HATTIE goes off, right. WAMPLER, after a glance and chuckle at GRACE, exits, left.*)

ERNEST (*going to door*)

The act's over! They'll wear out that rag, taking it up and down. Here they come!

(GRACE, *half dressed, runs over to the door, excitedly.*)

LORNA (*entering*)

There ain't been a reception like this since Lindbergh!

(MAL *enters left, crosses stage, catching ORIOLE in his arms in the doorway as she enters. She has an armful of flowers. MAL picks her up and deposits her on trunk, center. ORIOLE is followed by LEON, TRACEY, LORNA, DAVE. All are in costume, and all alone, miserably, carrying ORIOLE's kimono, standing down right as they all crowd around ORIOLE, is HATTIE. Great excitement. The others applaud ORIOLE and take up the cry "Speech—speech."*)

ORIOLE

Did I do it like you wanted, Mal?

MAL

You bet you did, kid!

CONNIE

Knocked 'em for a row of ash cans!

LORNA

You were simply wonderful, Oriole!

ORIOLE

Wait till they catch me in the deathbed scene.
Watch 'em turn on the water works!

LEON

You said something, kid! There won't be a dry seat in the house.

MAL

Here's a bunch of flowers I got for you.

ORIOLE (*grabbing them*)

Are they for me?

LORNA

Mal, you're starting spending your money again.

MAL

Why not? You know what we did to-night?
(*All come to attention.*)

OMNES

No.—How much?—What?—etc.

MAL (*reading from a slip of paper in his hand*)

Three hundred and fifty-six fifty—capacity. (*Murmurs of joy from crowd.*) A hundred seventy-eight twenty-five for the flood sufferers and the same for us.

DAVE

Well, I'm a son of a gun!
(*HATTIE through this has crossed back stage and sits in chair down left.*)

MAL

Wait!—Listen to this—
(*Piano offstage stops.*)

We booked another benefit to-morrow night at Red Forks. The same terms—fifty-fifty.
(*General ad lib from crowd.*)

LEON

Mal, you're a wonder!

TRACEY

It's a great idea, this benefit racket!

(TRACEY shakes MAL's hand and puts his arm around him. LEON pats him on the back. MAL puts on the Legree wig at table. GRACE and CONNIE go up left and talk excitedly. They are joined by LORNA.)

ORIOLE

What does it say on the card? (*Reading from the card.*) "For my prodigy, the greatest Eve ex—ta—tant, extant. From her manager." Oh, Hattie, did you hear that?

DAVE

Oh, I got something for the new star—a little box of candy I bought for you.

(DAVE gallantly presents her with WAMPLER'S candy.)

ORIOLE

Oh, goody! Gee ain't I great! Can I eat the candy now, Mal?

MAL

Yes, you can have one for being such a good little trouper.

HATTIE

You leave that candy alone! (*She crosses and takes the candy from ORIOLE, but not before ORIOLE has grabbed a piece and stuffed it in her mouth.*) I'm the one that gets the doctor's bills!

ORIOLE (*impudently*)

I can do anything Mal says. He's the manager.

MAL

Listen, folks,—the show ain't over—hurry into your clothes! We got to go up on the Auction Mart in a minute.

(*HATTIE is seen looking at MAL's flowers, her eyes fastened on the card.*)

CONNIE

Hat, you ought to hurry and get her changed for the death bed.

HATTIE

Will you mind your own business, please! Everybody's got so much to say round here.

CONNIE

Well, you don't have to bite my head off. I didn't put Oriole in the part!

(*CONNIE goes out.*)

DAVE

Come on troupers! Out on the platform—Auction scene.

(*He exits and the curtain music is heard offstage.*)

LORNA

Well, good luck, Baby! We'll be there in the wings rootin' for you.

(*She exits.*)

LEON

I should say we will!

(*He exits.*)

ERNEST

Oriole, you're making theatrical history. Best of luck!

(He exits.)

GRACE

We got our fingers crossed.

(She exits.)

TRACEY

Try not to stay upstage all the time like a good girl now, won't you?

(He exits. The curtain music stops, through the door we hear the Auction Mart scene going on, LEON offstage knocking his gavel on the block.)

LEON *(offstage)*

"The sale is going to begin. Gentlemen, I'm about to auction off the negro servitors of the late Mr. St. Clare. How much am I offered for this yellow gal?"

(Various bids are made.) "Two hundred bid—two hundred—two hundred—who'll give me three? Who'll make it three? She's a good nigger, guaranteed to give you value received. I am bid three—three—three."

ORIOLE *(who is changing her dress)*

Hat, what did Mal write on the card?

HATTIE

The greatest Eva ever extant.

ORIOLE

What does "extant" mean, Mal?

HATTIE (*helping ORIOLE grudgingly*)

Yes, ask him that.

MAL

Extant—why, that just means—

HATTIE

It means in the whole world—it means that you're better than anybody that ever played Eva.

ORIOLE

Better than you?

MAL (*quickly*)

Oh, I wasn't thinking about you, Hat.

HATTIE

No—you never did!

MAL

Don't say that.

HATTIE

Why not?

MAL

Because it isn't true. It seems like all my life I never thought of anybody else *except* you.

HATTIE

Yes, and the first chance you get, you throw me over—for what?

MAL

I never did—you threw me.

HATTIE

For what? Just to get even, that's all you did it for!

MAL

Oh, no, Hat, you got it all wrong.

HATTIE (*loudly*)

I wouldn't let my private quarrels stand in the way of my professional judgment.

(*MAL closes door leading to stage.*)

MAL

Easy now! They can hear you out on the stage.

ORIOLE

Mal, can I have another piece of candy?

MAL

Yes.

HATTIE

No! You want to be sick. You already had two desserts for supper.

(*To MAL.*) You'd think to hear you talk that Eva'd never been played before.

MAL

I never said—

HATTIE

Oh, yes, you did! The greatest Eva extant—compare me to a rank amateur.

MAL

You ought to be ashamed of yourself talking that way.

ORIOLE

Yeah! What are you sore about?—'Cause I'm good?

HATTIE (*slapping her*)

You shut up!

MAL

Gee, Hat, you're acting like you're jealous of Oriole.

HATTIE

I'm not—I'm not—I tell you I'm not!

MAL

Well, you ain't jealous of me, are you? Just 'cause I'm getting along without you.

HATTIE

I don't know—Maybe I am.

MAL

I can't see why? I'm trying to amount to something.

HATTIE

Yeah, and you spoiled the show.

MAL

Spoiled! Why, the show never went so good as it's going to-night.

ORIOLE (*dressing*)

I'll say it didn't.

MAL

You see—a kid—I mean a real kid in the part—
well it makes all the difference in the world.

HATTIE (*sits on trunk*)

Oh—I see—

MAL

Hat, I wouldn't hurt your feelings for anything,
but—

HATTIE (*beginning to cry*)

But you mean I ought to quit now because I'm too
old—

MAL

I didn't say that. It's just the part—it's a kid
part. You can't help it because Oriole's a kid and
you're not.

(ORIOLE, who has been trying to get into the night-
gown sets up a wail. She has torn her costume.)

MAL

Now what's the matter?

ORIOLE (*holding up nightgown, showing tear*)

Look, I tore it!

MAL (*crossing to her*)

My God, couldn't you be more careful! Here.
(He grabs a piece of candy and stuffs it in her
mouth. ORIOLE instantly ceases crying.)

Hat, you ought to help her.

(He crosses back of trunk to make-up table.)

ORIOLE

Hat, get a needle and thread quick and sew me up.

(ORIOLE goes to trunk and gets HATTIE's sewing basket.)

HATTIE (*wiping her eyes*)

There isn't time. You'll have to wear it as it is.

ORIOLE

I don't want to play Eva all ragged. It won't take you but a minute.

(She hands HATTIE the cigar-box work basket and then takes off her wig.)

MAL

It won't show from the audience, Oriole. Now be nice.

ORIOLE (*with fiendish stubbornness*)

Well, I won't go on if it ain't sewed. I can't act unless I feel right in my clothes. I just won't do it!
(By this time she has removed the nightgown and has thrown it in HATTIE's lap.)

MAL

Oh, star stuff, eh? Well then hurry up, Hat—You'll have to help her. We ain't got time to argue.
(HATTIE has been making an attempt to thread the needle but her eyes are blinded by tears.) Now Hat, you gotta pull yourself together.

HATTIE (*pitifully*)

I can't see, Mal.

MAL (*taking the needle and thread from her*)

Well—here—give it to me! (He tries one or two stabs at threading the needle. Then almost whining.)

My God, I oughtn't to have to be doing this!
(ORIOLE *surreptitiously steals two pieces of candy. He threads the needle and hands it to HATTIE.*)
There now! Listen, Oriole, don't forget to die on your elbow and smile sad.

ORIOLE

You don't have to tell me. I know.
(DAVE *opens the door right suddenly.*)

DAVE

Mal, your cue!

MAL

Oh, my God—"Oh, so a nigger with his boots blacked," etc.
(*As MAL exits, leaving the door open, so that some of the scene is heard.*)

ORIOLE

Oh, please don't cry, Hat. Everything'll be all right—you'll see. From now on I'll act and you can get married to Mr. Wampler and I'll support you. (*She steals a piece of candy—tries to get a second one but her conscience makes her ask.*) Can I have a piece of candy for being such a good Eva?

HATTIE (*feverishly sewing*)

No, you little fool, if you had any sense you'd know you can't stuff yourself with candy and then give any kind of a performance.

ORIOLE

It won't hurt me.

HATTIE

No, it won't hurt you! *Nothing would hurt you.*
You don't remember, I suppose, what the doctor
back in Jackville said about it giving you sour
stomick.

ORIOLE (*sneaking another piece*)

I know better than him.

DAVE (*entering right*)

Hurry up, Hat, it's nearly time for her scene.

HATTIE

I'm doing the best I can.

(DAVE *exits closing the door.*)

ORIOLE

Tracey said if I'd been playing your part all along
we mightn't have gone on the rocks.

HATTIE

Oh, keep quiet, will you?

ORIOLE (*babbling on*)

I should think you could see yourself what difference
it makes in the show; and now that I got your part
I'm goin' to keep on playing Eva all the time.

(*She steals another piece of candy.*)

HATTIE

You will not!

ORIOLE

You won't have nothing to say about it.

(HATTIE *for the first time notices ORIOLE stealing*)

the candy. She quickly hides the piece behind her back.)

HATTIE (*going to ORIOLE and taking box from her*)

How many times do you want me to tell you to leave that candy alone?

ORIOLE

Mal said I could have all I want.

HATTIE

Oh, he did, did he?

ORIOLE (*putting a piece of candy in her mouth*)

Yes, and he's the boss.

HATTIE (*slowly and quietly*)

Yes, he's the boss.

(HATTIE, after a moment deliberately offers the box to ORIOLE.)

ORIOLE

Can I have two pieces?

HATTIE

Mal said you could have all you want, didn't he?
I suppose you're so great you deserve it.

ORIOLE (*looking in box*)

I like the ones with the strawberry insides best.

HATTIE

You do? Well, you just find one of them.

ORIOLE (*wolfing down a chocolate*)

No, that was pineapple.

HATTIE

Well, keep right on till you find a strawberry.

(ORIOLE is now digging into the box gluttonously.)

Uhuh, I better get enough while you're letting me.

HATTIE

Why not? You wanted candy. Well, you can have it.

(Giving box to ORIOLE.)

What does it matter? What does anything matter?

(ORIOLE greedily stuffs a half a dozen pieces in her mouth.)

ORIOLE (*dizzily*)

I guess maybe I had enough—

(HATTIE slips the mended nightgown over ORIOLE'S head.)

HATTIE

Be sure you have all you want. You're the great little Eva now, you know. There's nothing too good for you!

DAVE (*calling in from door, right. The piano player offstage begins to play "Hearts and flowers."*)

For God's sake, Hat, get her out! We're ringing up on her scene!

ORIOLE

There goes the music for the deathbed. I got to hurry.

HATTIE

Wait a minute! Make 'em wait! Take your time. Why, you're the star!

ORIOLE

But Mal won't like it if I'm late.

HATTIE

Sure. It's all Mal now. Ain't it? He's the boss, the big manager, and he wants his infant prodigy.

(HATTIE gives ORIOLE a vicious push.)

ORIOLE (*surprised at this outburst*)

Why, Hat!

(ORIOLE backs away from her in alarm.)

HATTIE

Go on, go on! It's your big scene. Knock 'em cold! Act your damn head off!

(ORIOLE exits groggily, while HATTIE sinks weakly on trunk.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE TWO

We are now facing what is dignified by the term of a stage, in the K. of P. Hall, Centralia, Kansas. The stage is a more or less improvised platform on which it has been the pleasure of the residents to give occasional local entertainments. These entertainments are mostly benefits and to-night there is to be another one, but this time with professional talent. The scene on the stage, is Eva's chamber. A couch is center and at foot of it is a table bearing a lamp. The stage is dimly lighted. The piano-player plays "Hearts and Flowers" throughout entire scene.

Time:—Immediately after.

At Rise: ORIOLE, dressed as Eva, is discovered pale and wan, lying on the couch, propped up by pillows. TRACEY, as Uncle Tom, stands at the foot of her couch, with Bible in hand. By the side of Eva is CONNIE, as Topsy.

ORIOLE (*in a high quavering voice*)

"Oh Topsy, I love you, I love you because you haven't any father or mother or friends. I wish you would try to be good for my sake."

CONNIE

"Oh, dear Miss Eva, I will try to try. I never did care nothin' about it befoah."

ORIOLE

"If you try you will succeed."

CONNIE

"I will try, but den I'se so wicked!"

GRACE (*entering left*)

"How shiftless!"

ORIOLE (*arms uplifted toward the wings*)

"Look in those clouds. They look like great gates of pearl. Uncle Tom, I am going there."

TRACEY

"Where, Miss Eva?"

ORIOLE

"To the spirits bright, Tom; I'm going before long."
(*Suddenly ORIOLE feels an uncomfortable twinge in her stomach. She gulps.*)

TRACEY (*to the audience*)

"It's jest no use tryin' to keep Miss Eva here. She's got the Lord's mark on her forehead."
(*Enter ERNEST as ST. CLARE, right. He takes his position in back of Eva's couch.*)

ERNEST

"How's my little Eva tonight? (*ORIOLE gives him a sickly look.*) Do you know, Ophelia, that our little Eva took a fancy to Tom whom we met aboard the steamboat and persuaded me to buy him?"

GRACE

"Oh, she is so odd!"

ERNEST

"As we approached the landing, a sudden rush of passengers, precipitated Eva, into the water."

GRACE

“Gracious-heavens!”

ERNEST

“As she rose to the surface for the last time, a man leaped into the river, grasped her in his arms and held her up until she could be drawn aboard the packet. Who was that man, Eva?”

ORIOLE (*trying to keep from being sick, swallows hard*)

“Uncle Tom.” (*Taking ERNEST’S hand.*) Papa, I am going to leave you. I am going—never to come back.”

ERNEST

“Oh, now, you must not indulge such gloomy thoughts.”

ORIOLE

“I’d rather be in Heaven.”

(*Eva’s eyes are beginning to pop out of her head. Her cheeks puff up once or twice as she stares at the audience; she places her hand on her stomach.*)

ERNEST

“What makes you sad?”

(*ORIOLE grasps her stomach again.*)

ORIOLE

“Papa, isn’t there a way to have Uncle Tom made free? Then when I am gone—”

ERNEST

“There, there, my little pussy—Uncle Tom shall have his freedom.”

ORIOLE (*starting to get up*)

Oh, do something—I'm terrible sick!

ERNEST

"There, there, my little pussy—Uncle Tom shall have his freedom."

(ERNEST *pushes Eva back to couch.*)

ORIOLE

I ain't fooling I tell you. I really am! Oh, God, maybe I'm going to die right now, really and truly!

ERNEST (*in a last forlorn hope that she will respond to the cue*)

"There—there, my little pussy, Uncle Tom shall have his freedom." (*Pushes ORIOLE back to couch.*)

What the hell's the matter with you?

(ORIOLE *is now in great distress. She is rubbing her stomach, pulling her knees up to her chin.*

TRACEY *is none too gently pulling her legs down.*)

TRACEY (*on his knees*)

"Heaven is full of gold streets and angels—angels with big white wings and carrying harps."

ORIOLE

I want my sister! I want to get out of here. Oh, gawd, I'm sick! It's them chocolates!

(*There is consternation among the actors as ORIOLE grasps her stomach, and with some of the bed clothes clinging to her gets up and rushes off the stage, one hand on her mouth and the other holding her stomach.*)

MAL (*grabbing her as she reaches the wings and yelling*)

Dave—Dave—for God's sake ring down that curtain!

TRACEY (*an actor to the end*)

"Thank the Lord, Massa, it's all over!"

(*A whistle blows signalling the house curtains to close.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

Immediately following the sudden conclusion of Eva's death scene, MAL THORNE, in the costume of Simon Legree, parts the curtains and steps before the footlights. He is nervous and excited and shows it in his speech.)

MAL (*removing his Legree moustache*)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I regret to announce that Miss Oriole Hartley, who you have just been witnessing in the role of Eva, has been took suddenly sick. If there is a doctor in the house, it will be an act of mercy if he'd report at once to the stage door. The little thespian is plucky, and will resume her role as soon as possible. (*Pause.*) I also beg to announce that we are under new management this season, and expect to be back next year bigger and better than ever. On behalf of the company and myself I want you to know that of all the towns we have played, we have never enjoyed playing any place as much as we have here, and we will always remember your beautiful city of—of—

(Embarrassed, he takes a new tack.)

This benefit performance to-night means more to we thespians back of the footlights than you can possibly know; so I beg you to keep your seats and we'll go on with the drama as soon as possible.

(He bows awkwardly and backs through the curtains.)

BLACKOUT

ACT THREE

SCENE THREE

Setting: Same as Scene I.

Time: Immediately after.

At Rise: The stage empty for a moment. Then noises of general commotion off right. MAL enters carrying ORIOLE who is crying and writhing in pain. HATTIE rushing on after MAL and the others—GRACE, ERNEST, LEON, LORNA, TRACEY, DAVE and CONNIE—all chattering excitedly—follow.

CONNIE

Ain't it just terrible!

DAVE

It would have to happen when we got a house big as the 101 Ranch!

GRACE

Wonder what hit her? She stopped right in the middle of the death bed.

TRACEY

I knew it all the time—you can't take a green kid like that and expect to make a trouser out of her in one night. (*To ERNEST.*) They ain't dependable.

LORNA

Ain't there something we can do?

LEON

What about our Peruna?

CONNIE

That's nothing for the kid. It's her stomick. It's always been weak. She's just scared.

ERNEST (*to LEON*)

In all my twenty years in the theatre I never saw—

CONNIE (*throwing an old costume over the trunk, center*)

Oh shut up! Lay her out here flat, Mal.

(ERNEST *goes out right*.)

MAL (*depositing ORIOLE on top of trunk*.)

Get back, all of you. Give her air! (*They back off. To HATTIE*.) Throw that parade coat over her.

HATTIE

Wait till I get this wig off her and loosen her clothes. (*She takes off wig and nightgown*.) Oh, you poor kid, what have I done to you? Feel any better now?

ORIOLE (*whimpering*)

No!

MAL

Where does it hurt, kid?

ORIOLE

Oh—all over but mostly in my belly!

(ORIOLE's cheeks puff up and she grips her stomach.)

DAVE

Acts like she's been poisoned.

HATTIE (*in a frenzy of remorse*)

Poisoned? Oh, my God!

MAL

What about giving her a dose of—
(*Whispers "castor oil."*)

CONNIE

That's what she needs!

HATTIE (*to DAVE*)

Dave—run over to the drug store and get some—
(*She whispers.*)
—Oh—Mal—could I? Could you let me have four
bits for some?

MAL

Sure! (*Taking out money and peeling off bill and
handing it to DAVE.*) Hurry, Dave, and buy a
whole lot of it!

DAVE

O. K.

(*DAVE runs off, left.*)

ORIOLE (*who has heard the whispering*)

I won't take it!

MAL

Oh—yes—You'll let Mal give it to you and then
you'll be all right and you can go on and finish the
show.

ORIOLE

I'm finished with the show now!

MAL

Oh, no, we got to get you so's you can go on.

ORIOLE

No—never! It makes me sick to act. Hattie's right—I'm never going to act again.

HATTIE

Thank God! Here, Leon, give me that coat for a pillow.

(LEON gets a parade coat from the dais—hands it to CONNIE who rolls up coat and places it under ORIOLE'S head.)

ORIOLE (*moaning*)

Oh—I'm so sick!

HATTIE (*rubbing ORIOLE'S stomach*)

Lorna, light your sterno and heat some water quick! (GRACE hurries off left.) Connie, get my hot water bag in the trunk there. (CONNIE gets hot water bag and then goes over to sterno stove.) Oh, my Lord, why did I let her do it!

(The audience, off right, is heard applauding and whistling impatiently.)

TRACEY (*taking flask from his pocket*)

Do you suppose a swallow of white mule—?

MAL

Do you want to kill her?

HATTIE

No, take it away—please, all you folks—get out—leave us alone—won't you?

LEON (*taking him by the arm*)

Come on Tracey, that wouldn't do any good.

TRACEY (*murmuring*)

It's always done me good.

(*Exit* LEON *and* TRACEY, *right*.)

MAL

It's hell to have to go on with the show and the poor kid sick this way.

HATTIE (*working over* ORIOLE.)

Her pulse is getting better. That's all we troupers are good for. I've gone on when I was dyin'.

MAL (*after a moment*)

Hat—would you go on now? Would you go on and finish the death bed?

HATTIE

Oh, I couldn't!

MAL (*pleading*)

If I ever needed you in my life.

HATTIE (*bitterly*)

Oh, you need me now—!

MAL

I certainly do—Uncle Tom without the "death bed."
I wouldn't blame 'em if they ran us out of town.

CONNIE (*eagerly*)

Why don't you, Hat? It'd be great—two little Evas—two—count 'em! It'd boost the troupe all through this territory.

(GRACE *enters with glass of water, gives* ORIOLE *drink and soaks handkerchief and bathes her head.*)

HATTIE

I can't do it, I tell you.
(*But she is weakening.*)

MAL

No, I didn't suppose you could. My first and last job as a manager—a flop! I'll go out and tell 'em they can have their money back.

HATTIE (*in alarm*)

You wouldn't do that.

MAL

I'll have to!

HATTIE (*with an effort*)

No—don't—I'll play.

MAL (*joyfully*)

You will?

(*HATTIE's answer is to begin at once to disrobe.*)

HATTIE

Here—Connie—Lorna—one of you come here and rub the kid's stomick! For God's sake, ain't that water hot—?

CONNIE (*pouring hot water in bag*)

Coming, right off the fire!

(*CONNIE puts bag on ORIOLE's stomach. Enters DAVE, left, with glass of castor oil.*)

DAVE (*panting*)

The drug-store guy says give her all of it.

MAL (*taking glass from DAVE*)

I'll do that. Get into those clothes, Hat.

(*To ORIOLE.*)

Come on, honey, swallow it right down.

ORIOLE

It's castor oil, and I hate it!

MAL

This is nice and it'll make you all well again.

HATTIE (*as she dresses*)

Go on, sweetheart—do what your told.

CONNIE

Open her mouth and hold her nose.

ORIOLE

Shut your mouth and hold your own!

CONNIE (*aside to LORNA*)

She's better.

MAL

Come on—for your *old* pal—

(*ORIOLE, with a horrible grimace, drinks the stuff. Then she shudders and the others shudder sympathetically.*)

MAL

Good for you, kid!

CONNIE

That'll do the work.

DAVE (*wisely*)

It won't be long now!

MAL (*crossing right*)

I'm going out and announce you, Hat. I'm going to tell 'em the good news—they're going to witness a performance now by the most wonderful, the greatest little Eva—

HATTIE (*putting on her wig*)

Extant.

MAL (*smiling*)

Now lay off! No, I'll tell 'em they're getting more than their money's worth—two Evas—the great Harriet Hartley, the most beautiful, talented, lovely, exquisite, star Little Eva of the theatrical constellation.

(*He exits, right, hurriedly.*)

HATTIE

Connie, he's the sweetest fellow the Lord ever let live. I'm just crazy about him.

CONNIE

You haven't thought of mentioning that to Mr. Wampler, have you?

HATTIE (*shocked—dismayed at the thought*)

Oh—no—why, I couldn't!

ORIOLE (*her hand to her mouth. She rises dizzily—seized with violent nausea*)

Oh—I'm—I'm going to—!

(*Clapping her hand over her mouth she starts on a run for door, left.*)

LORNA

Quick, a wash bowl!

GRACE

There's none here!

CONNIE

Take her outside! Hold it, Oriole—gangway. Hold everything!

(The three of them grab ORIOLE and exit, left, with her. HATTIE follows them offstage but re-enters almost immediately.)

HATTIE *(pulling up her stockings.)*

Show business is tough. Your own sister may be dying but you've got to go out there and give 'em all you've got.

DAVE

Well, I'm going to listen to Mal's speech. If you want me holler.

(DAVE exits, right, closing door and shutting out sound of MAL'S voice. CONNIE enters, left.)

CONNIE

Oh, boy, another night like to-night and I'll be ready for the boobyhatch!

(WAMPLER enters, left.)

WAMPLER *(to CONNIE)*

What's the trouble? Why did the play stop?

CONNIE

Oriole threw up her part.

(CONNIE goes out on the stage.)

WAMPLER (*seeing HATTIE in Eva's costume*)

Say, what are you doing there?

HATTIE (*hesitantly*)

Why, I've got to go on and play Eva.

WAMPLER

Who said so?

HATTIE

Why—I promised Mal—that—

WAMPLER (*jealously*)

You promised *Mal*—Well, I got something to say about that—You promised *me* you'd give up the stage and I expect you to keep your word.

MAL (*entering hurriedly, right*)

I got 'em hollering for you, Hat. Hurry!

WAMPLER

She's not going on.

MAL

Why ain't she?

HATTIE (*confused*)

Why, Mal—

WAMPLER

Tell him now. Let's get this thing settled once and for all. Did you or did you not give me your word to quit this theatrical rubbish?

HATTIE (*haltingly*)

Why—yes—I did, but—

(LORNA and GRACE enter, left, with ORIOLE.)

(To ORIOLE.)

You feeling better, darling?

LORNA

She'll be all right now.

(ORIOLE stares at WAMPLER coldly.)

ORIOLE (*to WAMPLER*)

We don't need any undertakers to-night.

HATTIE

What did you say?

ORIOLE

Well, that's what he is—an undertaker!

HATTIE

What are you talking about?

ORIOLE

Dave told me and said he didn't want anyone to know about it.

GRACE (*to LORNA*)

You see?—she didn't know anything about it—did you, Hat?

HATTIE

But it isn't true, is it? You said you were in the furniture business.

WAMPLER

With side lines, but anyway, ain't that furniture?

HATTIE (*horrified*)

Why, Mr. Wampler—I—Do you have to go to funerals and everything?

WAMPLER

Not all the time.

(MAL is silently watching this scene with grim satisfaction the way things are turning against his rival.)

HATTIE

And your wife—would she?—Oh, I *couldn't*, Mr. Wampler! (*She turns to GRACE.*) Oh, my Lord, married to an undertaker!

WAMPLER

Why, that's all right.

MAL (*militantly*)

It is? Then why didn't you tell her—oh, no! You've been going ahead fooling her all this time.

HATTIE (*to MAL*)

It just goes to show you can't trust anybody.

WAMPLER

There's no harm in being a mortician.

MAL

No, I guess they're necessary in their place—Well, Hat ain't going to need one for a long time.

WAMPLER

I'll thank you to keep out of this! Hattie, take your choice here and now. Do you want to be a decent respectable woman, or do you prefer—

MAL

Come on, Hat! Hurry into your clothes. You know it ain't right for a trouper to keep her audience waiting.

HATTIE (*after a second—making up her mind*)

I'll be ready in a minute.

(*She goes to dressing table.*)

WAMPLER

If you step on that stage, I'm through!

HATTIE

Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Wampler, but I'm afraid I've *got* to.

WAMPLER

No, you haven't. You want to! At heart you're nothing but a cheap Uncle Tom actress.

MAL

Not so cheap. From now on I'm the manager and she's goin' to get paid.

WAMPLER

All right! I'm mighty lucky to have found you out in time. You're going to be sorry—I'm saying good-bye and I wish you both all the luck that you deserve.

(*WAMPLER storms out, slamming the door.*)

MAL (*grinning at HATTIE*)

That's all the luck we need.

HATTIE

Oh, Mal, I don't know what to say.

MAL

Oh, it's all right. (*The manager again.*) Grace, Lorna, get out there and stand ready for your cues. (GRACE and LORNA *exit right*. DAVE *enters, right*.)

DAVE

Say, Hat, you ought've heard 'em when Mal announced your name. They been hollering their heads off!

MAL

She'll be ready in a minute. Here, Dave! (*He hands DAVE the ukelele.*) Take your uke and give 'em a tune. Hold 'em till she's ready.

DAVE

O. K.

(DAVE *exits, right*.)

MAL (*as he crosses he sees ORIOLE on trunk alone and hugs her*)

How do you feel now, kid?

ORIOLE (*grinning*)

I'm all right now.

MAL

Wonder what happened to her? She acted like she'd been poisoned.

HATTIE (*going to him penitently*)

Mal, I can't go on until I tell you something.

MAL

What?

HATTIE

I did the dirtiest trick I ever played in all my life on anyone. And I played it on my own sister. All my life I'm going to try to make up for what I did to-night.

MAL

What are you talking about?

HATTIE (*blurting it out*)

I let her stuff herself with chocolates to make her sick.

MAL (*aghast*)

You don't mean it?

HATTIE

I wanted to see her flop! (*Going left of trunk to ORIOLE. Hysterically.*) But you're all right now, thank God.

(*HATTIE kneels at ORIOLE's feet and starts to cry.*)

MAL (*raising her to her feet*)

Come on, Hat, pull yourself together. You've got to give a show to-night.

HATTIE

Yes, yes. I was just all mixed up—after I'd played Eva all these years. I was jealous, I guess. I didn't want you to succeed without me. I'm crazy about you.

MAL (*taking her by the arms*)

I couldn't do anything without you. It was just love and the thought of losing you that made me succeed.

HATTIE

And you have succeeded, Mal. You're just wonderful.

MAL (*with all the confidence in the world*)

I know it. Why, I've even discovered new territory, haven't I, *the flood route!*

HATTIE

Yeah! (*Then worried a little.*) But the floods'll be down in a few weeks and then—

MAL

That's all right, we're in Kansas, and thank God there'll always be cyclone sufferers to play for.

HATTIE (*hugging him*)

Oh, Mal!

CONNIE (*sticking her head in door right*)

Hey, Romeo and Juliet, you know you got an audience waiting out here!

(*She exits, right.*)

MAL

Holy mackerel, we nearly forgot 'em!

HATTIE (*adjusting her blond wig*)

Yeah, well here I go, Mal. (*Music "Hearts and Flowers" is heard off, right.*) Little Eva will be

played to-night as she has never been played before.
I'll show 'em who's the greatest Little Eva!

(She starts for door right, followed by MAL and ORIOLE.)

ORIOLE *(quietly)*

I'll bet she won't be as good as I was.

CURTAIN

